ALIENS VS. PREDATOR!

#87

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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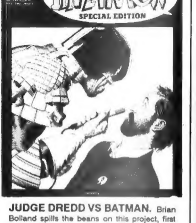
JLA-AVENGERS. George Perez and Roy Thomas tell all about a project that never saw print. Perez's never printed art, only available here! Also John Workman on Heavy Metal, Barbara Breathed on Bloom County, Mike Friedrich on the biz end. Perez cover.



JUDGE DREDD VS BATMAN. Brian Bolland spills the beans on this project, first time round. Ann Saba saddles Neil the Horse. Don and Maggie Thompson give an inside view of the Comics Buyer's Guide. Bolland cover.

ROBOTECH. Carl Macek & Neil Vokes - from TV to comics - tell why Robotech's a hit. Phil Foglio - Hugo Award winning Sci-Fi artist mumbles about Myth-Adventures, and Cat Yronwode on art for art sake and comics for comics sake. More, Vokes & Rankin cover.

TEENAGE NINJA MUTANT TURTLES. Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird give it up. How Turtles Mania began...(look where it went..) Stan Drake on the colorful career of his girls, Kelly Green and Blondie. Peter B. Gillis on censorship, comedy & death! Eastman & Laird cover.

DARK KNIGHT. Frank Miller expounds on his magnum opus. Fred Finger, on his father, Bill. Bob Kane, on the last 50 yrs since Bat birth. Jerry Robinson, on past memories. Burt Ward on the trouble with tights, and George Roussos on the early days. Miller cover.

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DARK HORSE COMICS

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& MONTY SHELDON
art

JRM
color

PRED-
DAK-
TOR

UP FRONT

PREDATOR.

Isn't that someone who goes out with your date — before you do?

For some reason, it seems that really irritates those who are not citizens of our country:

ALIENS.

And, much to everyone's surprise, the foreigners have picked a fight with those who go on (your) dates (before you do).

What's this got to do with comics?

I don't really understand it, myself — but, boy, is this ALIENS VS. PREDATOR thing all the rage these days!

So whether we understand this strange and seemingly inexplicable phenomenon or not, it behooves us here at COMICS INTERVIEW to talk to those who do.

As for me, I'd spend a lot more time worrying about my sworn enemy — the Immigration and Naturalization Service — if I were one of the ALIENS. And, hey, isn't a PREDATOR metaphorically a lot like the king's food taster, in this day and age of sexually transmitted diseases?

C'mon, both of you — get real.

-David A

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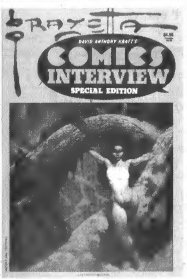
. . . Special editions of COMICS INTERVIEW reprint sought-after interviews. There is some excellent material herein.

Grade: A.

— Don Thompson
COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE



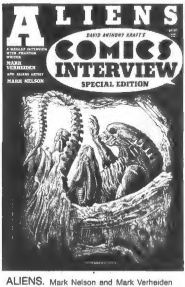
FRAZETTA. Frank Frazetta. This artist of great renown shares his thoughts on many media from comics to fine art. Frazetta cover.

SEX & VIOLENCE IN COMICS: WHO'S TO BLAME?
DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S
COMICS INTERVIEW
SPECIAL EDITION
Will YOUR favorite comics be BANNED ?

SEX & VIOLENCE IN COMICS. Frank Miller, John Byrne, Jerry Perles together with Ron Turner all expound on the limits and far-reaching effects of laws and perceptions. Plus an open forum from the stat*treach Chicago trade show on the censorship theme.

WATCHMEN. Alan Moore reveals what he thinks of super-heroes, and talks about his controversial creation. Daniel Greenberg and Ray Winninger on the WATCHMEN game modules. Hank Rose on the secrets of a marketeer. Dave Gibbons cover.

LONE WOLF. Frank Miller speaks his mind. Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima, creators of a Japanese legend, in a talk from Tokyo. Plus First Comics crew Rick Obadiah, Kurt Goldzung, Alex Wald, Paul Guinan, Willie Schubert and Rick Oliver. Kojima cover.



ALIENS. Mark Nelson and Mark Verheiden point out the positive and negative problems of dealing with Aliens. Mike Richardson and Randy Stradley on directing a Dark Horse, and managing freelance talent. Nelson cover.

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"You can show more of a monster in comics than movies."

JOHN ARCUDI

John Arcudi is both different from many of the other Dark Horse crew members and similar, as well. Different, because he's not from the West Coast — he lives and works in New York. Similar, because his ambitions lean toward the movie business. He has solid opinions about what makes for a good comic book and the experience to back them up, with credits at Marvel and CRACKED as well as Dark Horse, and a stint on staff at New York's superstore of comics and SF, Forbidden Planet . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *Tell me a little about your schooling and your career 'til now.*

JOHN ARCUDI: I don't know what bearing my schooling has on all this — little, if any — but okay. I graduated from Columbia University in 1983 and got into comics quite by accident. In 1985, I started working at Marvel on SAVAGE TALES and did occasional stories for SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN and sort of stumbled into Dark Horse in 1987 or '88. I guess it was.

PAT: *What did you major in in college?*

JOHN: English — which is why I don't have a *real* job. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *That's okay — I majored in journalism and I don't have a real job, either. What kind of things did you write for SAVAGE TALES?*

JOHN: I wrote a series — a short-lived series, because SAVAGE TALES was short-lived — called Skullhunter, about a near-future bounty hunter. It was set in, like, maybe 1995.

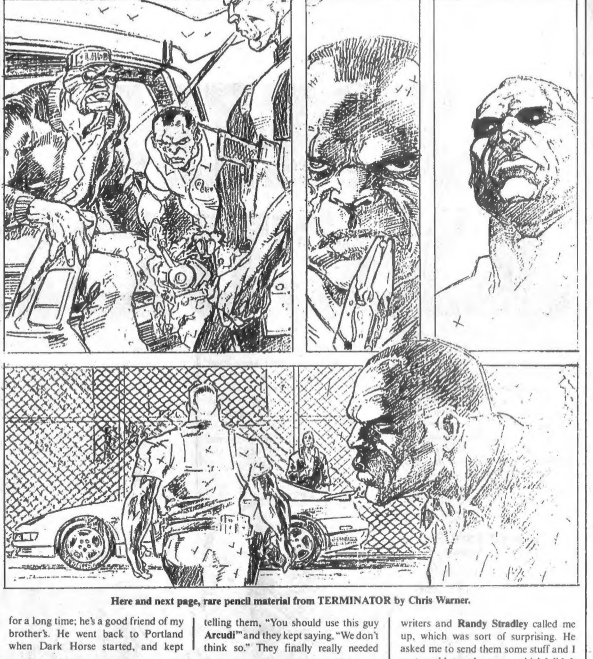
PAT: *How exactly did you "stumble" into Dark Horse?*

JOHN: Well, I've known **Chris Warner**

TERMINATOR, the comic book, as written by John Arcudi and illustrated by Chris Warner and Paul Guinan.

TERMINATOR TM & ©1990 Greenberg Brothers Partnership/Cinema 84 / HOMICIDE ©1988 John Arcudi and Grant Miehm / THE DAEMON story © Arcudi art © Gene Colan.

"The basic thing that kids are looking for is the monster



Here and next page, rare pencil material from TERMINATOR by Chris Warner.

for a long time; he's a good friend of my brother's. He went back to Portland when Dark Horse started, and kept telling them, "You should use this guy **Arcudi**" and they kept saying, "We don't think so." They finally really needed writers and **Randy Stradley** called me up, which was sort of surprising. He asked me to send them some stuff and I sent an old story I wrote — which I didn't think anyone would ever have the guts to publish — loosely based on **Howard Unruh**, America's first real "take as many with me as I can" mass murderer. They liked it and said, "Let's see some more."

Unruh's still alive, by the way, in a mental institution in New Jersey. One of the few mass murderers who is still alive.

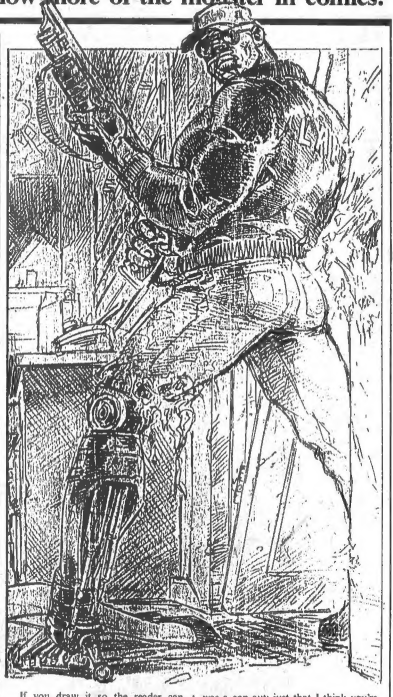
PAT: *You're writing PREDATOR now. How did you get that assignment, following up on Mark Verheiden?*

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: John Arcudi
Home: New York City
Occupation: Writer
Credits: PREDATOR, TERMINATOR, THE MASK, SAVAGE TALES, CRACKED

Education: Columbia University
Startling Opinion: "I think there are as many as ten 'hot' artists who just barely know how to draw, but who learned one little quirk that is carrying them along."

— and you can show more of the monster in comics."



JOHN: It was kind of strange. Randy called me up to ask me to take on TERMINATOR, so they could get a jump on it. I was really taken unawares. I started working on that, and we had been bandying about the idea of me writing PREDATOR for a while. **Verheiden** wrote the one that was based in New York and they were talking to me about it because I live in New York. Mark was, I think, slated to write the second series, but when I was in the middle of the second issue of TERMINATOR, Randy called me up and asked, "Do you think you have time for PREDATOR?" "Well, I guess I better quit my job," I replied. So I did and wound up writing PREDATOR.

PAT: *You're essentially doing new stories based on established characters from these films — but the reader coming into this series is buying them. I assume, hoping to get the same kind of excitement and feel that he got from the movies. As Mark Verheiden put it, movies and comics are not the same animal. How do you translate that feel from the moving picture to the still picture of comics?*

JOHN: Maybe movies and comics aren't the same animal, but they're related. The differences may appear minor on paper — no sound in comics, the time element in movies, which covers a huge range of possibilities you can do in film that you can't do in comics — but they create an abyss between the two forms.

The basic thing that kids are looking for in those movies is the monster — and you can show a lot more of the monster in comics than in movies. You *should* show a lot more of the monster, because you can't generate the same level of excitement as you can in the movie. That may sound crass —

PAT: *In a sense, you should do it because the movie's reason for not showing the monster more is cost, while it doesn't cost you any more to draw the monster than to draw anything else.*

JOHN: And it doesn't cost *me* anything, since I just type, "Draw the monster." And the other reason, in this case, is because the point of the movie is Predator's incredible camouflage effect. Right now, I'm trying to work out with the artist what we're going to do with that. It's an important aspect of the Predator's appeal. In the first series, they just made him invisible, which really wasn't the case in the movie — but it's very difficult to draw that and still make it seem like whoever's looking at the Predator can't see it.

If you draw it so the reader can see it . . .

PAT: *It's hard to get the suspension of disbelief?*

JOHN: Exactly. We're playing with maybe a burn-in white outline effect as an idea. Maybe that will work. I haven't written too much of the camouflage effect in yet — but I have to because it's an important part of the movie. That's one of the problems we're having.

I'm not saying making him invisible was a cop-out; just that I think you're missing out on a bet there. One of the first things we discussed was some kind of a graphic that could be laid over the art. Like zip-a-tone. I thought that could work, but I haven't seen the art yet, so I don't know.

Anyway, we use the monster more as a character than just a catalyst, the way he was in the movie.

PAT: *What's your working method, particularly on PREDATOR? Are you*

"You can't say, 'The Predator thinks this way.' No — the

working full-script?

JOHN: Yeah, full-script. I think most writers do now. I storyboard the whole issue and then write from the storyboard. Of course, whatever I write, the artist has the leeway to improve in a visual sense. He has full freedom to do what he wants, as long as he maintains the plot and the pacing.

I have definite visual images in mind as I write, for each page and for each panel. I think that helps the artist.

PAT: *Is it more or less difficult to do a licensed project like PREDATOR than to write something you've created yourself?*

JOHN: I wouldn't go either way. There are trade-offs. There are parameters that are set with a film property, by the licensor, and you have to keep that in mind. When you're working on something of your own, you don't.

On the other hand, with something you create, you are trying to get a specific point, image or character across, and you have to work at it. I've rewritten some of my things four, five, six times. With something like PREDATOR, once the parameters are set for you, you can launch forward with that.

I have no problems with working within parameters. Obviously, when I was working at Marvel, there were jillions of them. But it does put limitations on what you have in mind; you can't take the same sort of license with PREDATOR to say, "The Predator thinks this way." No — the Predator thinks whatever way the licensor tells you he does.

PAT: *On the other hand, you don't have the responsibility for coming up with an entire world to surround him. That's already been given to you.*

JOHN: Exactly. Well — yes and no. With TERMINATOR, that's true. But Predator is transferable. The character sort of creates his own world. The series I'm writing, for example, has nothing to do with either **Mark Verheiden's** work with the character or the movies. It's based in New Mexico on a military base and the main character is a Navajo Indian. I thought the most interesting thing about the movie was the Indian character; he's much more noble about approaching the creature on a one-on-one basis — and, obviously, the creature just shoots him! **Arnold Schwarzenegger** gets to be much more devious and go one-on-one with the creature successfully — but that's because he's Arnold and he's the star of the movie.

PAT: *What other projects do you have cooking right now?*

JOHN: I'm working on HOMICIDE, a series for Dark Horse. I'll be wrapping that up, because there's not that much fan interest in it and I want to write stuff people will read. I really like HOMICIDE and I think it's really interesting, but if no one else does, maybe I'm wrong.

I'm starting a new series for Dark Horse — we've tentatively agreed on it, anyway. It's kind of a surrealistic shift from HOMICIDE; it's based on a private detective who will be introduced in HOMICIDE. I don't want to say too much about it, but let's just say he's not exactly the average human being. He's not a super-hero by any means, but he suffers from disfigurement that is common but not too common. It's gonna be very surrealistic.

From DARK HORSE PRESENTS #24 (1988), HOMICIDE: A Whiff of Madness, an early work by Arcudi and Grant Miehm. Next page, a more recent work from MONSTERS ATTACK #3, The Daemon, illustrated by Gene Colan.

Predator thinks whatever way the licensor tells you"

HQ! GASP! 2-LARRY-15 IN NEED OF BACK-UP!
HQ?! IS ANYBODY THERE? I NEED HELP MAN!
...YOU DIE!
BUT HE WASN'T TOLD THAT IN SPECIAL SITUATIONS...
KRAK!
THE DAEMON
Gene Ha

I'm also working on THE MASK, which is a Dark Horse property. They've sold that to New Line Cinema and they've got a shooting script and as far as I know, they're either in preproduction or production, right now.

PAT: *Randy Stradley told me they're in preproduction.*

JOHN: There's gonna be a series based on the character that I extrapolated from **Mark Badger's** character, which was sort of extrapolated from **Mike Richardson's** character. Lord knows how close this is to anything Mike had in mind. The movie people enjoy it and it got a lot of

"I would like to do more humor stuff."

I'VE GOT A SUSPECTED CRACK DEALER, NAME OF BERTRAM HOLLISTER-- FROM THE WEST L.A. AREA.
I'M ISSUING AN A.P.B., AND NEED HIS LICENSE PLATE AND THE MAKE OF HIS VEHICLE.
I HAVE A RED DATSUN 300ZX, LICENSE ZATV360, REGISTERED TO DR. BERTRAM HOLLISTER, BUT HE'S ALMOST 60 YEARS OLD!
YES, MA'AM, THAT'S THE ONE.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

Yeah, go ahead, make my day. Artwork from TERMINATOR.

popular response when it ran in MAYHEM. So there will be a four-issue MASK mini-series; we'll see if that generates more interest.

I'm also doing some things for CRACKED right now.

PAT: *So you have some humor to get out of your system, too?*

JOHN: I would prefer to do more of that sort of stuff. Not that I don't enjoy what I'm writing, but I would like to do more humor stuff. CRACKED has provided a good outlet for that. It's one thing to tell stupid jokes to your friends and get laughs, it's another to produce something that a 12-year-old kid can appreciate but you also think is funny. It's pretty goddam hard. It really fine-tunes your ability to communicate, which is what writing anything is all about.

PAT: *CRACKED is a strange place to work, I guess, because it's always been the weak sister competitor to MAD . . . but recently it's gotten a lot of attention.*

JOHN: And rightfully so. The editor up there, **Mike DelFemine,** did a lot to really make that magazine a very healthy competitor to MAD. It owes a great debt to MAD, of course — most humor magazines do — but at that same time it's more focused on kids, and I think MAD's lost that focus. MAD's hired maybe two new artists in the last 20 years and CRACKED is constantly looking for new talent of all sorts. MAD is mostly interested in satires of really popular things, while CRACKED has introduced just silly goofy features.

Pat Boyette is doing some of the funniest stuff I've ever seen for CRACKED — and it's got nothing to do with movies or TV. It's got nothing to do with anything that's going on. Pat's a really ignored talent.

PAT: *I've always thought so. There are a lot of people like him in the world. He's certainly among the people I look at and ask, "Why hasn't he ever been more popular?" There are times I just don't understand the fan mentality toward artists at all.*

JOHN: It's pretty hard to second-guess them. I used to work in Forbidden planet and you would think you knew what was going on — then something would come in out of left field and get popular and you'd look at it and say, "This sucks!"

"I don't have time to get back into screenwriting."

But people were buying it in twos and threes and I'd just be shaking my head. It had nothing in common with last year's mediocre comic that sold real well, so I don't know what the fans see.

PAT: *Sometimes I think they see a certain surface flash and they don't recognize the lack of real drawing ability underneath. I could name six or seven people I'm talking about.*

JOHN: I think there are as many as ten "hot" artists who just barely know how to draw, but who learned one little quirk that is carrying them along.

PAT: *Even more importantly in comics — and as a writer you must see this, too — is the ability to tell a story, to pace the stuff out and do panel transitions. There are people who, on one level, are good artists, but what they're drawing are four to six individual pictures on a page, they're not really creating any kind of movement.*

JOHN: If there's movement, it's within each panel. There's no sense of what's going on.

PAT: *You can certainly tell when you're looking at your own work and can tell that the story has not been told as well as it could have been.*

JOHN: I should think that some editors or writers would be saying, "Yeah, this guy may be hot — but couldn't he tell my story any better?" Maybe the bottom line is always sales — but there's no reason you can't be talented and still sell well.

PAT: *To finish this up — where do you see John Arcudi in five years?*

JOHN: Out of New York, is all I can tell you. *(Laughter.)*

I'd like to get into screenwriting.

PAT: *Everybody I've spoken to who has any connection with Dark Horse either started out wanting to be in films or is on their way into films. I wondered if you were in that ballpark, too?*

JOHN: I don't know if I'm on my way. I stumbled into comics after attempting screenplays, and now I'm writing so much for Dark Horse I don't have time to get back into screenwriting. I've been sitting on three or four ideas for screenplays and I've never gotten beyond the treatment stage. It's pretty frustrating.

I'm perfectly happy, to tell you the truth, just writing and having people read my stuff. Wherever I am in five years, I hope it's still writing and making a living at it.

"I moved to L.A. in '83 because I wanted to write movies."

MARK VERHEIDEN

Very few aspiring screenwriters get the chance to hone their storytelling skills on characters as well known as the title monsters of ALIENS and PREDATOR. Mark Verheiden has that opportunity, scripting those series for Dark Horse Comics. And now that has turned around, as Verheiden handles the screenwriting chores for Warners' impending adaptation of his own Dark Horse series, THE AMERICAN. The problems of adaptation — in both directions — formed the core of our conversation . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *You went from wanting to be a filmmaker to writing comics based on well-known films. How'd you land this particular assignment.*

MARK VERHEIDEN: I don't know how far to go back exactly. I moved to Los Angeles in 1983 because I wanted to write movies. I came down here and struggled with all the other strugglers, had a couple of screenplays optioned, and actually had one go into production in a very truncated, bizarre version. That's called TERROR SQUAD and you can rent it or enjoy it on cable

PREDATOR and ALIENS TM and © 1990 20th Century Fox.

(on ALIENS and PREDATOR): "Sometimes problems

EVEN IF THIS THING EXISTS, WHO SAYS WE'LL BE ABLE TO CATCH IT?
HERE-- RIPLEY CONVINCED THE BASE COMMANDER TO HOLD THEM WHILE SHE ARRANGED FOR A SHIP.
STOREROOM'S BEEN UNDER LOCK AND KEY EVER SINCE. SEEMS EVEN THE IDEA OF HAVING THEM ABOARD GIVES THE RANK AND FILE THE JITTERS.

Here and next page, artwork by Sam Kieth, from ALIENS: EARTHWAR, issue #3 of a 4-part series.

television all the time now, much to my horror.

I was working on movies. My TERROR SQUAD experience was so bad that I said, "That's it. If this is what it's like to write movies, to hell with it!" Right at that moment, just about, some old friends of mine in Oregon started Dark Horse Comics and they asked me if I'd be interested in submitting something to them. I said OK and submitted THE AMERICAN, which became the first book I did for them.

Not too long after that, they started going after the rights for ALIENS. And I think because of my film-writing background — plus the fact that I knew them and they knew I could do a decent job on it — they asked me if I'd be interested in writing ALIENS.

The thing that was most attractive about it was that it was not an adaptation of the movie, which I was not interested in doing at all, but actual new stories. I thought that was a great idea and it sounded like fun.

There's the long-winded version.

PAT: *What is to you more attractive about doing new material based on these characters and concepts, as opposed to simply adapting the screenplay?*

MARK: As a writer, doing an adaptation from an existing screenplay is just a craft thing; you're just trying to see how you can fit something somebody else has already written into a different medium.

I have done exactly one straight adaptation. I adapted the movie BIG for Dark Horse and with any luck that will be the last one I do. Although I never say never; there could be something interesting that comes up.

It's interesting — I've sort of been pegged as the guy who does the movie books, but I've only done one adaptation, all the others have been new stories — including THE HUMAN TARGET that I just did for DC, based on the ABC-TV movie. That was a new story springing from their characters.

Mike Richardson is sort of doing the adaptation of ALIENS, the movie, and he's found an interesting way to do it. He's taken a novel approach by telling it through a point-of-view character within the story, so you get some new information, new material. That's an interesting way to do it, too.

The other point I have about adaptations in general is, "If you can rent the movie for a buck, why do you need the comic?"

PAT: *That's been brought up a couple of times in the last several years. Don Thompson in COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE has mentioned that. Twenty-five or 30 years ago, the comic-book adaptation made sense, because there was no other way to have a keepsake of the movie. Now, three to nine months later — at most, 12 months — it'll be out on videotape. As bad as videotape versions of some movies might be, it's still gotta be better than the comic book.*

MARK: I also don't believe that movies and comics are all that interchangeable. Some people say that comics are like movies on paper. That's an easy way to put it; sure, there are similarities, but comics and movies are a lot more different than people tend to believe. I

have more to do with external things than story things."

don't think comics are just storyboards for movies. To think that the two just translate that easily is a mistake. Movies have their strengths and comics have theirs.

I have to deal with that, now that I'm getting back into doing screenplays; I'm trying to find again the strengths in both ends.

PAT: *What are the particular problems of adapting characters and concepts from films into new stories in comics?*

MARK: Sometimes the problems have more to do with external things than story things. For instance, if you're working with a film company that is very protective of their characters, that may not give you much latitude with what you can do in the context of the story.

In the case of ALIENS and PREDATOR, I've been very, very lucky, because Fox has been very open and receptive to just about everything I've suggested or Dark Horse has suggested on these books.

PAT: *If you ever want to hear some horror stories about companies that take the opposite attitude, call Peter David and ask him about STAR TREK.*

MARK: I've heard some of those stories. There's a case where the film company has some very rigid ideas about how the characters and stories should be and a very hands-on approach to the process.

PAT: *Often, as well, from what Peter tells me, contradictory ideas . . .*

MARK: With ALIENS and PREDATOR, I'm just a lucky devil, because I think Fox was concerned when we started the first series — they were concerned because Dark Horse was a smaller company than Marvel and DC, there may have been some fears that we were going to drop the ball and not do them up right. I think we allayed those fears with the first series.

As we move on, we can keep the quality up. It's not for me to determine whether we keep it up, but I think we are. The film company just kind of says, "Go ahead and have fun!" With ALIENS, there came a point where they said, "You can pretty much do what you want; just don't kill Ripley, don't kill Hicks, don't kill Newt." I can live with that.

PAT: *God knows, they may want to use them again.*

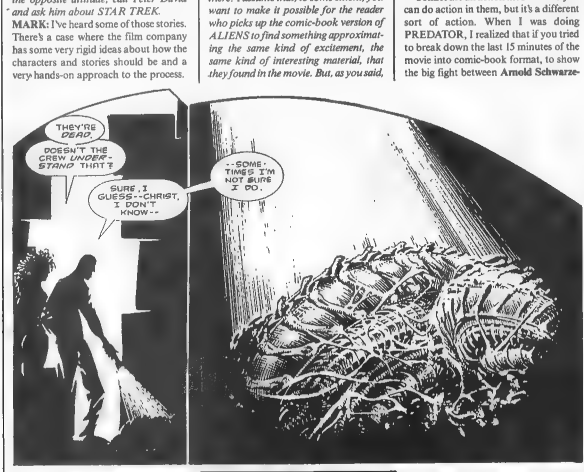
MARK: As restrictions go, I'll take those any day over somebody nit-picking every line of the script. That's maddening.

PAT: *What kind of internal problems are there? I assume that, to some extent, you want to make it possible for the reader who picks up the comic-book version of ALIENS to find something approximating the same kind of excitement, the same kind of interesting material, that they found in the movie. But, as you said, the two media are not necessarily identical — or even compatible — how do you approach it to keep that flavor?*

MARK: Pretty early on, I decided — and, again, this comes out of my feeling that movies and comics aren't the same, especially with ALIENS and with PREDATOR — to try and figure out what were the strengths of those films that I could use in the comics medium.

With ALIENS, I decided it was the more horrific overtones that would translate well. I would be able to tell a much better story with a first-person narration, which is what I've used throughout ALIENS and PREDATOR. You can't do that kind of inner monologue in a movie, but you can in a comic book. That sort of inner monologue lends itself to horror. I don't think comics can compete on the same level as movies in straight, outright action. ALIENS, the movie, is one of the best action movies I've ever seen; it goes 100 miles an hour. But you can't translate that kind of visceral, intense quick-cutting into comics.

Comics are an action medium and you can do action in them, but it's a different sort of action. When I was doing PREDATOR, I realized that if you tried to break down the last 15 minutes of the movie into comic-book format, to show the big fight between **Arnold Schwarze-**



"I thought ALIENS was darker than PREDATOR."

Aliens II **written by Mark Verheiden and illustrated by Denis Beauvais.**

negger's character and the Predator, you'd have a 40- or 50-page book.

PAT: *Just for that 15-minute sequence!*

MARK: Each panel would have to be a set-up, the action, the resulting action. All that stuff can happen in film in one three-second shot.

PAT: *After a while, you wouldn't even need a writer. You could hand that last 15 minutes to an artist and have him freeze-frame and block it out on paper.*

MARK: Here you're talking about a straight adaptation, but you'd really only be story-boarding the movie. You don't need to do that. The video exists on its own and you can rent it for two bucks or less or buy it for $19.95! Why do that?

Those are decisions I made in tandem with Dark Horse, with **Mike Richardson** and **Randy Stradley,** to really go for the strengths we felt comics could achieve with these movies.

The fun thing about springing off from movies — especially movies as rich as ALIENS — is that you have this huge subtext that you can draw from for ideas. You can go back and pull out little things that happened in the film and spring off entire storylines from them. That's fun, to have that sort of textual basis to rise up from and expand upon.

PAT: *Many people would see ALIENS and PREDATOR as very similar concepts. You've got the horrific monster from outer space in conflict with human beings — how do you differentiate them as a writer? How do you avoid treating the same themes?*

MARK: Actually, I thought ALIENS was much darker and more brooding than PREDATOR. PREDATOR to me is sort of the science-fiction equivalent of a good-time book; you pick that up and you're gonna have a good time. There's nothing too heavy or intellectual about it; it's just a fun, action-packed, rousing sort of book. ALIENS, to me, is more dark and I'm dealing there with themes

"I actually look at this as a giant 14-issue story."

Sam Kieth's Alien.

that are a little heavier than those in PREDATOR; themes of religious obsession, military corruption, greed — greed basically destroys Earth in the series. PREDATOR, on the other hand, is about a big guy who comes up against a monster and knocks the crap out of him.

That's how I differentiate them; I see PREDATOR as this up, fun book. ALIENS is fun, too, but in a darker sense. The other interesting thing about the two series is this — the Alien is not the protagonist in ALIENS. I've said this before; the Alien has always struck me as kind of like a big dog. The Alien is not something that pushes action necessarily; it just *is*. Things happen around it, in the act of encountering humans it may make a mess, but the Alien itself usually does not initiate the action.

Predator, though, is a sentient being and he does initiate the action. He comes in and starts slugging. In that respect, the two main characters in these books — if that's what you want to call them — have very different ways of getting into the story.

PAT: *Differentiate ALIENS II from ALIENS III — how do the storylines differ? How many times and ways can you do humans against a particular antagonist?*

MARK: It's interesting how this series developed. When we started the first black-and-white six-issue series, we had no idea that it would go over so well. We hoped, of course. It was plotted as a six-issue story. As we got into it, and we realized how successful it was, we knew we would want to continue it.

So the second series and the third series are continuing the storylines started in the first one. I actually look at this as a giant 14-issue story, a maxi-series, that we've broken up into convenient 6- and 4-issue chunks, to make it easier for people to get a handle on and to make less of a burden on each individual artist. These are very art-heavy books.

"I haven't seen too many powered heroes make a huge

If I had to break them down, I'd have to say the second series is basically Newt coming into her own. She's now 18 and we set up the idea there's a little girl in Earth in the same position Newt was in when Newt was on Acheron in the events of ALIENS the movie. Newt wants to save her in the same way Ripley saved Newt. In the third series, Ripley comes back and she's lost that maternal feeling she had for Newt. It's been beaten out of her through bitterness and anger. Newt rekindles that in her at the same time she rescues this little girl.

That's the human story — and the other story is what the Aliens are doing on Earth. Again, it's more what humans are doing with the Aliens, causing their own downfall, than what the Aliens actually do.

PAT: *That's interesting. I thought it was interesting that, especially in the second movie, you consistently get the impression that, as terrible as the Aliens seem to be in the way they use human beings for their own purposes, the humans keep being stupid about what they want to do. The whole idea of "Let's bring one back with us . . ." Are you out of your mind?!*

MARK: Part of the whole substructure of the ALIENS series is that some men look to the Aliens to empower them, somehow. They think they can use the Aliens; what they don't realize is you can't use the Aliens, the Aliens are going to use you. It doesn't matter what you do or how smart you think you are, these things are tougher, more intrinsically knowledgeable about survival than humans will ever be.

PAT: *It's almost as if you had a giant predatory cockroach. You don't want to introduce cockroaches to a habitat where they've never been before — they'll take over.*

MARK: Right. The other thing about the Aliens is that, unlike humans, they don't care. You can blow away 400 of them and they don't care. That's their strength — they'll just keep coming and coming until you're out of ammo and you're dead. Humans care and that's a good thing in terms of what Newt and Ripley discover in the third series — when they really discover they should care again — and it's a bad thing when it becomes a greed proposition and the corporate types are trying to breed the Aliens as weapon systems or as soldiers. That doesn't work too well.

PAT: *Even if you get them to obey you for a while and win your war, what are you going to do with them when the war's over?*

MARK: Right — what have you got left here? They're just not trainable. They're not German shepherds; they don't take the bone.

PAT: *You mentioned some other projects — the HUMAN TARGET for DC. Tell me a little about that.*

MARK: The Human Target is a character created by **Len Wein** and **Dick Giordano** back in the '70s. He's a guy who takes the identity of another person and replaces them when that person is under threat of assassination. His plan is to try and capture the assassin before he, himself, is killed.

We're doing it again because **ABC** has made a TV-movie starring **Rick Springfield** about the Human Target, that will air in September. DC wanted to do a new

story about the character as kind of updated and tweaked a little by ABC's writers. They asked if I'd do it and I said sure. It's a 40-page special drawn by **Giordano**, hopefully coming out around the same time as the ABC movie.

PAT: *Provided you can count on ABC not playing around with their scheduling.*

MARK: The book will come out, either way. It's not an adaptation of the film, it won't spoil it for anyone if they read the comic before seeing the movie . . .

PAT: *On the other hand, it will sell a lot better if the two hit at the same time.*

MARK: We'll all keep our fingers crossed.

You want to hear about the other projects?

PAT: *Sure. What else are you working on?*

MARK: The other on-going book I have, besides ALIENS and PREDATOR, is STALKERS — a sort of mercenary in the future, sarcastic, tongue-in-cheek thing for Marvel/ Epic. It's a monthly on-going series that started a few months ago. The idea is that it's 1999 in America and the corporations have been besieged by terrorism. I kind of see it the way Colombia is now. The corporations don't like hiring security forces because it's not cost-effective, so they decide to create a franchised mercenary anti-terrorist organization called Stalkers. They franchise it out to anyone who has the money. Some of these Stalker franchises are good, some are not so good. Our stories revolve around different franchisees meeting up with dire terrorist situations, or funny ones, or crazy ones. I co-created this with **Jan Strnad** and we're going for a sarcastic, cyber-punky worldview.

I'm also doing THE AMERICAN still for Dark Horse, with a new mini-series coming out in early 1991.

PAT: *Where do you see Mark Verheiden five to ten years from now? Will you still be working in comics, or will you be back slugging away in Tinseltown?*

MARK: I'm already back in Tinseltown. Today I finished a rewrite of THE AMERICAN for Warner Brothers. The executive producer is **Joel Silver,** who did DIE HARD and PREDATOR and LETHAL WEAPON. I'm getting very good response off THE AMERICAN screenplay and I'm being offered other screen work.

PAT: *Is the screenplay for THE AMERICAN pretty much based on what you've done in the comics?*

MARK: It springs off the first four issues of THE AMERICAN. It's changed to

splash, except maybe Superman and Wonder Woman."

some extent, but the basic tone and idea is still there. THE AMERICAN is about a world just like now, except there's this commando character named The American who, for the last 10 or 15 years, has been America's leading light, going out and tackling the bad guys for us. The story is about what happens when a down-on-his-luck reporter gets some information that suggests The American isn't all he's cracked up to be. Then The American himself breaks from the establishment and joins the reporter in pulling the lid off. That's the basic story of the film as well.

PAT: *One of the problems always discussed in adapting comics to film is making the costumed hero believable — especially in the sense of an audience accepting the reasons for wearing the funny suit. How did you handle that?*

MARK: I take him out of the suit, basically. The American's basically a commando, anyway, so there's no reason for him to wear an elaborate costume. In the comic, he wears a costume of sorts, but in the film he'll be wearing battle fatigues.

Costume is sort of an interesting term. If you think about it, Indiana Jones wears a costume — the hat, the leather jacket, the whip — it just doesn't look quite as ridiculous as a guy in a skin-tight thing with an "S" on his chest.

That's a bad example, because obviously sometimes costumed heroes can work on film. Superman's a good example; Batman, too. I haven't seen too many powered heroes make a huge splash, except for maybe Superman and Wonder Woman. There aren't many powered characters in costumes that really work well in film. I think that's because there's an inherent absurdity factor in super-heroes, when you get right down to it, that you have to surmount somehow. I'm not sure how

you would do it — I'd hate to be the person trying to figure out how to put WATCHMEN on screen. It's a brilliant comic that would look kind of absurd in a movie.

PAT: *I was surprised when it was bought up as a film property, because it relies on the reader having an intimate knowledge of what super-heroes are and how they operate in comics and then saying, "Let's put that in something vaguely resembling the real world and point up all the problems." If you're not willing to accept A, then B is impossible.*

MARK: It's kind of referential.

PAT: *Yes, it's very self-referential. It's sort of like trying to write a Sherlock Holmes parody in a society that passes Holmes off as ludicrous.*

MARK: That's exactly the problem: The characters require a certain level of suspension of disbelief that I'm not sure everyone has because they're not familiar with the characters, anymore.

PAT: *It's like the reason no one's ever done the AVENGERS or the JUSTICE LEAGUE — it's hard enough to get the audience to believe in one character, let alone eight or ten.*

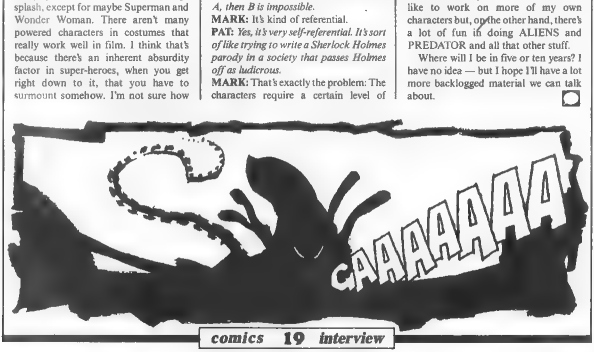
MARK: It'll be curious to see how well THE FLASH does on television. I've seen pictures of him in the costume — it uses the Batman molded torso, but he looks like the Flash, all red with yellow accents. I'm curious to see how they play it. Some people who have seen it say it actually works very well.

It's going to be unfair, anyway, because THE FLASH is going to be up against COSBY and THE SIMPSONS — so goodbye FLASH! I hear they didn't know THE SIMPSONS would be there when they scheduled it, so they may rethink the positioning. That's the first costumed hero to hit primetime since Wonder Woman or Spider-Man.

The Flash is an interesting one to try because there's only one gimmick there: he can move real fast. If you can buy that, you can buy into the whole mythos. If you don't, you've lost the audience. It's not like the Martian Manhunter — he can fly, he's strong, he can turn invisible, he can change shape . . . slice, dice, etc.

Getting back to your original question, some people complain that comics writers are only movie writers who couldn't make it. I don't believe that. I love both media and I hope to keep doing both. If I had my druthers in comics, I'd like to work on more of my own characters but, on the other hand, there's a lot of fun in doing ALIENS and PREDATOR and all that other stuff.

Where will I be in five or ten years? I have no idea — but I hope I'll have a lot more backlogged material we can talk about.



Goblins and Centaurs and Elves...

Fantasy rules this summer as Warp Graphics/Father Tree Press launches two outstanding new titles...**Elfquest: Kings of the Broken Wheel**, the bi-monthly comicbook series by Wendy and Richard Pini; and **Return to Centaur**, the first volume in the full-color **Xanth Graphic Novel** series by Richard Pini, Dennis Fujitake, and Gary Kato. Both titles are available at your comic specialty shop...or, you can order by mail or phone. **Subscriptions** to Elfquest: Kings of the Broken Wheel are available by mail only, and cost $15 for 6 issues. Make check or money order out to "Warp Graphics" and send with your name and address to 5 Reno Road, Poughkeepsie NY 12603. You can get **information on any of our books** (Xanth Graphic Novels, Elfquest Graphic Novels) by phone and place your order, using Visa or Mastercard by calling Publishers Book and Audio at (718) 667-6483. Don't delay!

"ELFQUEST exists on a variety of levels of maturity."

WENDY & RICHARD PINI

The Hunan Balcony East is one of my favorite restaurants in the lower midtown area of New York City. So, when Richard and Wendy Pini agreed to meet me outside Marvel Comics' offices on Park Avenue South, just a few blocks away, we set out for this Chinese restaurant for our lunch and interview. After ordering, while waiting for the food to arrive, Wendy showed me the make-readies for her second BEAUTY AND THE BEAST graphic novel from First Comics. Hence, the interview begins with a discussion of that project . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *Since we've just finished looking at the BEAUTY AND THE BEAST graphic novel, "Night of Beauty," let's start there: You say you started this before the TV series aired its first episode of the final season, in which Catherine died?*

WENDY PINI: It was interesting. **Ron Koslow,** producer of BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, was very satisfied with "Portrait of Love," my first graphic novel. There was about a month that went by while he was involved in other things, and then First and I began to talk about doing a second grahic novel.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Wendy Pini
Occupation: Artist/writer
Credits: Artist, writer, co-plotter — ELFQUEST, ELFQUEST: Siege at Blue Mountain, ELFQUEST: Kings of the Broken Wheel; artist, writer: BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Portrait of Love, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Night of Beauty
Among prized possessions: Original pencil sketch model sheet for Jonny Quest by **Doug Wildey**

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Richard Pini
Occupation: Publisher — WaRP Graphics' Father Tree Press
Credits: Editor, co-plotter ELFQUEST, ELFQUEST: Siege at Blue Mountain, ELFQUEST: Kings of the Broken Wheel; adapter: ISLE OF VIEW, a series of Xanth graphic novels, adapted from the forthcoming novel by Piers Anthony
Most hated aspect of current job: "I hate paying the bills!"

All artwork accompanying this interview
ELFQUEST ® 1990 WaRP Graphics/Father Tree Press / Normalman © 1990 Valentino / Beauty & the Beast ® 1990 Republic Pictures Corporation / Xanth © 1990 Piers Anthony / Dalgoda ® 1990 Jan Strnad and Fujitaka

"He told me, in some detail, what was going to

Here and next few pages, more pencil roughs from the first BEAUTY AND THE BEAST graphic novel.

Within a couple of weeks, I submitted a story which was sort of a standard "Beast and robbers" kind of story. **Koslow** was sort of lukewarm about it. "If you want to do this, you can," he said. Then I spoke with him and he told me, in some detail, what was going to happen in the third season and, needless to say, I was stunned.

I was able to see, however, a copy of the teleplay of the movie in which Catherine meets her end. Out of that grew this story. Essentially, it's Orpheus in reverse: Vincent goes into the afterlife to see Catherine, but his motives are quite different; instead of bringing her back, he has to send her further in. It's a great sacrifice, a great love story. **Ron Koslow** was very happy with it and I was given total freedom with it, once he accepted the script. I flew with it as though they were my own characters.

RICHARD PINI: He also gave you a hell of a compliment there . . . he said he wished he had the money to do this as the movie instead of what they did.

WENDY: No, not instead of . . . he wished they could have made a two-hour movie out of this to sort of put the cap on Vincent and Catherine's relationship.

We had an unlimited budget with the graphic novel *(laughter)* for special effects . . .

PAT: *That's one of the wonderful things about doing sf and fantasy in comics. You never have to worry, "How much is it going to cost to peel away someone's skull or put wings on a horse and make it fly?" It costs the same as it costs to draw anything else; however much pencil and ink you use!*

WENDY: In the afterword that I wrote for "Night of Beauty," I described the phone call from Ron in which he said, "I wish we could do this one . . ." and I wheedled. "Can't we scrape together a few million dollars?" And he cracked up, saying it would cost considerably more than a few. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Well, if anyone ever wants to do a big-screen version of BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, you've got the script.*

WENDY: I think nobody wanted to watch Cathy die. The feeling I had in doing this story was that maybe it would help some people who were deeply affected by it to mourn her. You'd get to see her one more time and say goodbye.

RICHARD: I think it's good that it comes out after the show has gone off the

happen in the third season, and I was stunned."

air, because on one of the computer bulletin board systems someone made the comment that not only did they not want to see Cathy die, but they didn't want to see her do it week after week, because it's in the opening. I think this writes a very nice *finis* to the series.

PAT: *Particularly since the producers didn't get to write one of their own.*

WENDY: No, **Linda Hamilton** wanted to leave the show; she had her baby and, from what I've heard, everything's fine there. I guess they were expecting her to do a few more episodes than she eventually ended up doing, so they really had to make a major shift for the third season, and put Cathy out of the picture within that one film. There was a lot of scrambling going on last summer in the BEAUTY AND THE BEAST offices.

PAT: *Let's move back to ELFQUEST.*

RICHARD: What's that?

PAT: *Sure . . . a strange topic to be discussing with Richard and Wendy Pini . . .*

I'm clear on this, because I've known you people for a long time, but I think a lot of readers are not clear on the fact that ELFQUEST is a joint project, that it's not just Wendy Pini who does ELFQUEST.

WENDY: Really?

PAT: *Yeah, when I talk to people about it, they say, "Oh, that's Wendy Pini's book." And I have to correct them, "No, it's* Richard *and Wendy Pini". . .*

WENDY: That's interesting, because Richard travels a great deal more than I do, and makes more appearances at conventions than I do. I tend to get the impression that *he* is now the voice of ELFQUEST.

PAT: *He's the spokesperson, but they see you as the person whose work is visible, I guess.*

RICHARD: You do the work and I exploit it.

WENDY: Let's set that record straight in this interview! *(Laughter.)*

RICHARD: We're having a great deal of fun with this new series. We worked closely together on the first series; we were not able to work so closely together on the second series, because there were things happening outside of — but connected to — ELFQUEST that had us both under a lot of pressure. Now we're back to having a whole lot of fun working together.

WENDY: It's so nice to have Richard back. If people don't realize that it's a joint effort, I can't stress too strongly how important he is to the plotline, because his feedback makes it go in

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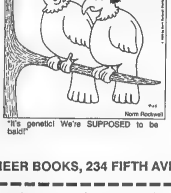

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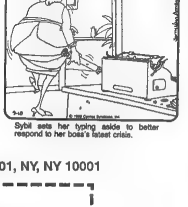

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"We're having a great deal of fun with this new series."

directions I never would have thought of.

PAT: *Do you see a difference in "Siege at Blue Mountain" because Richard was less involved?*

WENDY: Yes, for that reason, and for many others as well.

"Siege at Blue Mountain" was a team effort. My inker was **Joe Staton,** my letterer was **Janice Chang,** and that was unusual in itself, since I did the lettering and inking myself in the first series, with occasional assistance. And, of course, Richard was very much occupied with other things. We still had our story sessions, and he still edited each chapter as it came out.

But "Siege" was a very different effort, because it was an eight-part story, not open-ended or very long like the first one. It had a specific goal: We were essentially doing a story about child abuse and we had eight chapters in which to tell it. It was much more tightly focused on a single topic than we had done before.

RICHARD: With the original series, we had the luxury of letting the number of issues expand to take up whatever story we came up with. Way back, we had originally announced it as 15 issues; it grew to 20. We had the luxury to do that.

"Siege at Blue Mountain" was announced as a particular length. Each issue of "Siege" is very jam-packed, because we had a certain amount of story to get into eight issues. This is unlike both the first series and the new series.

PAT: *So it's not quite as leisurely . . .*

WENDY: Absolutely. One of the elements I think some people missed was individual characterization. ELFQUEST's following has different favorite characters, and they demand that each of these characters get his or her moment in the spotlight. We weren't really able to do that as much in "Siege" as we were before or will now.

I go back and look at "Siege" and I'm very happy with a great deal of it; it was great to work with Joe. He has a feel for cartooning that very few inkers who also do realistic work have. He has a nice fluid line; it's uncluttered and organic, which is something I've always appreciated in his work. Add to that that he did a scathing satire of ELFQUEST for another company . . .

PAT: *Wasn't it on First's version of E-MAN?*

RICHARD: Issue #7

PAT: *Marty Pasko wrote it, didn't he? He wrote all those scathing satires in the early First issues of E-MAN.*

RICHARD: "Smeltquest" was the title.

Here is yet another parody from the past — Normalman meets Elfquest, 1983.

PAT: *He mixed them with the Smurfs, right?*

WENDY: Most people do when they satirize ELFQUEST.

Working with Joe was tremendous; he really knew what he was doing. What I found was that our energies combined, because we're both very energetic artists and our work is very vigorous. The two combined was so . . . the word I guess I'm looking for is "explosive" . . . that it just spills all out of corners. *(Laughter.)* I tended to change my drawing style a little bit, because I was in tune with Joe's. I think he tended to change his inking style.

PAT: *I know people who normally ink their own work have a tendency to leave some of the drawing for the ink stage. Did you find yourself either putting those in again — or leaving them out and having them come out differently in Staton's style?*

WENDY: It got to the point where, if I forgot something in the pencils, Joe would remember to put that detail in

"We suddenly got a wild idea. We looked at each

when he inked it. It must have been a heck of a job for him, because we had thousands and thousands of characters in that series. He took it on like a trouper.

PAT: *He inked the AVENGERS at one time; it can't have been any worse.*

RICHARD: That's true.

WENDY: I think the thing that made the artwork in "Siege" the most different from the art in the original series was the quality of constant movement. There was almost no resting place; constantly energetic and very frantic.

PAT: *How did you come to call it "Kings of the Broken Wheel?"*

RICHARD: We've already had one person ask, "Are you gonna get **Gene Autrey** to do the music?" *(Laughter.)* I suppose it does sound a little bit like a Western, but the subtitle is drawn from clues we scattered throughout "Siege" and the original ELFQUEST. When we were setting up those plot elements, Wendy was talking about the things she wanted to have happen in the first issue, and my reaction was, "Wait a minute! We don't have a boundary — I think maybe there are too many things happening in the first issue. If we remove this one and just concentrate on these, we can do some wonderful things with development."

WENDY: I had to shift mental gears and realize we're doing an open-ended series again.

PAT: *The change from an open-ended series in ELFQUEST to a limited series in "Siege at Blue Mountain" — do you see that as a response to the changes in the direct-sales market? I see the direct-sales market as having become more structured, with the people who do the ordering looking for a set number of issues, et cetera.*

WENDY: Hmmmmm . . .

RICHARD: To a certain extent that's true.

WENDY: Do you think it might have been almost a subconscious response?

RICHARD: I think it was at least partly conscious. At that time, there were a lot of four- and six- and eight-issue series. That single-digit number-type. It was at the time we started "Siege" that the connection between WaRP Graphic and Apple Comics began, because WaRP just wanted to create comics and Apple was going to be the entity which published them.

We were talking in a business sense about a given period of time in which things should happen. I think those two factors, taken together, dictated an eight-issue concept.

If we had discovered halfway through that it wanted to be ten issues, we might have gone to ten, but it wasn't going to grow like Topsy after that.

WENDY: Once again, "Siege" had a very specific goal. It had a simple plot, a villain to defeat and a baby to get back — all in eight issues.

other and started 'what iffing' all over the place."

RICHARD: I guess we owe the Poughkeepsie Galleria Mall a certain amount of credit for the genesis of the idea that "Kings" is a big story that's going to go on for a long time. We had some ideas about "Kings of the Broken Wheel," and we go to this mall often because they have good fast food. We'll walk up and down the corridors and bounce ideas off each other

We were doing that one evening when one or the other — or both of us — suddenly got a wild idea. We looked at each other and started "what iffing" all over the place. The story went from quart size to 55-gallon drum size. We realized we had a tiger by the tail . . . and it was a very exciting one.

WENDY: What's gotten me the most excited about this is that I've fallen in love with ELFQUEST all over again, but on a grander scale. Whatever it is or was that people like about ELFQUEST, they're just going to get more of it this time. It's gonna be more lush, more emotional, more dramatic, more humorous.

PAT: *That brings up an interesting question: How do you, after almost 11 or 12 years of working on this one basic concept, maintain your own enthusiasm?*

WENDY: It's like a marriage. Like they say in THE FOUR SEASONS, "You have your peaks and you have your valleys." *(Laughter.)* There are times, of course, when you have to work through a writer's block or an artist's block, because you have a schedule to meet, and that's hard. But — how can I put this? — it seems like I can't remember a time when we weren't doing ELFQUEST together. It's like having a child. There have been times when we've been tired of it, or not in tune with it, but the kid's home and we're delighted. Right now, we're just in love with all the possibilities.

RICHARD: Again, from late '85 to late '88, there were events surrounding ELFQUEST of a legal nature that were very draining of energy. It's difficult to do any work under circumstances like those we found ourselves in. Now, we own ELFQUEST lock, stock and barrel; we're working together; we have our mechanism set up for printing and distribution. It's all done but the doing. All of that stuff being set up allows us to just focus on telling the story, which is a lot of fun.

WENDY: I find what's happening with the artwork in the first chapter is that there are a lot of silent panels, in which we just take advantage of the characters' facial expressions or actions. That goes back to the leisurely idea, of letting the reader absorb at his own pace what the character might be thinking or feeling, without spoon-feeding it to him.

RICHARD: Also, there's a return to the "business."

I can go back and read ELFQUEST, now years later, and find things that Wendy drew in there that I missed the first 150 readings. Now that I'm doing it for the 151st time, I look and say, "Oh!"

And I'll go to her and ask, "Did you do that on purpose?" And she'll smile at me like I'm some sort of chimp, saying, "Just figured that out now, did you?"

WENDY: *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *I can remember being in an English Lit class and asking the instructor, "Did the author really mean to put that in there, so we'd remember it when we get to page 127? Sometimes, the instructor would say, "Yes, of course he did" and other times he'd say, "That depends. Give him the benefit of the doubt."*

WENDY: I have to confess that sometimes Richard finds things and asks if I did it on purpose and I answer, "No! I don't even remember doing that!"

RICHARD: Note to the transcriber: We are taking a fried dumpling break.

PAT: (through a mouthful) *Since I'm undoubtedly the transcriber, that's not necessary.*

(Wendy notices that the restaurant is playing Bette Midler's "Wind Beneath My Wings.")

"There are a lot of silent panels in the first chapter."

WENDY: How did this song *ever* win a Grammy? I hate the ending . . . I wish she would just stop!

PAT: *She does drag it on forever, doesn't she?*

Getting into the business side a little, Richard: We delayed this interview because you were on your way to the West Coast to talk about other things that were going on, that might affect not only ELFQUEST in other media, but even ELFQUEST in print. What can you make public?

RICHARD: I was spending several days hanging my nose over the shoulders of people who were demonstrating very powerful new computer colorizing systems to me. If anyone is at all familiar with Macintosh color computers or Commodore color computers, they know that there are programs that allow you to draw and paint color illustrations. This software has gotten tremendously powerful — witness **Ted Turner** and colorization. Whatever you may think of it, it's a powerful piece of programming.

We are working with a producer on the West Coast who will take the existing artwork from the original ELFQUEST series and turn it into four story-teller type videos, the first of which will be ready in June. They will be distributed through video stores.

In order to do this easily, they are scanning the artwork into the computer memory and then manipulating it with these powerful programs — taking out the word balloons and putting in color. Once that's done, they can do anything they bloody well want with it.

WENDY: They can even do a little bit of animation, which is really exciting

PAT: *Yes, I've seen some of this done — they can isolate a piece of the picture and make it move. They can't do anything very intricate, but they can certainly make an arm move from waist to shoulder level.*

WENDY: They can do marvelous things with color. They can fade a daytime sky to a nighttime sky; they can do reflections in water, things like that.

PAT: *So this will largely be still pictures, fading in and out?*

RICHARD: We're not trying to say to anyone that these are animated cartoons. That's why I use the phrase "story-teller." If you go into a video store, you can find tapes that consist of narration over illustrations from a book, with some manipulation of the images, along with music and sound effects.

This is a large and growing market — "kideo video" — and if we can tap into that, we achieve two goals: We get ELFQUEST as a concept recognized by a much larger audience than we now have and we open that audience to the idea of other ELFQUEST things.

"ELFQUEST was always done with animation in mind."

That part of the visit is fairly straightforward. These people are working on this right now. They also wanted to know whether or not it would be possible to scan Wendy's art from "Kings of the Broken Wheel," colorize it in computer and then print out separations — film negatives — to send directly to the printer. All rather than coloring the pages in the traditional manner, photo- or laser-separating them in the traditional manner, and then sending those negatives to the printer.

We went back and forth on that for several days. While the coloring effects are quite amazing and very beautiful to look at, we decided against — at least at the present time — doing it that way, because even at a fine scan resolution, you get a dot pattern that will wipe out some of the very fine detail work Wendy does with brush and ink. We couldn't have that.

So, for at least ELFQUEST Book 7, the first four or five issues of "Kings of the Broken Wheel" — which we hope to have out in November or December — we'll have the coloring done right here in New York by Chelsea Animation, who did the work on the first six.

PAT: *DC is using some kind of a computer coloring system on some of its books, notably DOOM PATROL. I don't think they're scanning the artwork to create the black plate — that's still being shot from the artwork in the traditional manner — but they are scanning it in to do the coloring on computer and spitting out the other three plates as direct film negs.*

RICHARD: There are systems available now that make it borderline economical to do coloring in that way. It was not economically feasible for us to do ELFQUEST in that way because Marvel and DC mostly use a fairly limited palette.

For ELFQUEST, we have a much broader spectrum . . .

WENDY: We're looking for subtle shadings . . .

PAT: *I'll point out that the palette on the books DC is computer coloring is considerably broader than that on its hand-colored books, because they have a greater range of screens available.*

WENDY: Let's face it, it's still more or less an experimental process. I don't think everybody knows that the last scene of THE LITTLE MERMAID was the first animation colorized by computer.

PAT: *I knew they had animated a good deal of MERMAID on computer, as they had GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE.*

WENDY: But the last scene of MERMAID, with the big crowd scene — which would have taken painters a long time to paint — is colorized by computer. It's not noticeably different from the rest of the film, but it is still experimental. There's a long way to go with it.

RICHARD: Of course, when you're **Disney** and you have —

PAT: *Deep pockets.* (Laughter.)

RICHARD: *Very* deep pockets, and Mickey Mouse bucks to burn, you can do that. If we had an unlimited budget, I'd say we'd do it that way.

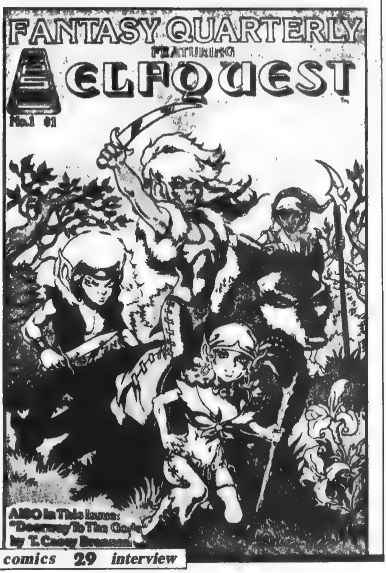
WENDY: I wouldn't be so quick to say we would brush Chelsea Animation off. I was very happy with the job they did and I love the look of animation colors on the ELFQUEST artwork.

It simply reinforces the thought that ELFQUEST was always done with animation in mind. People keep asking us, "When are you gonna come out with a film?" and our answer has always been, "When we can find a studio that will not take it and change it into "Elf Mutant Ninja Turtles" or "Thunder-Elves" or whatever and keep its integrity. Until that time, we think these videos are a nice stepping stone. People will have the artwork that they love and are familiar with, and something very close to the original story.

RICHARD: Kevin and Pete, nothing personal!

WENDY: We love you, Kevin and Pete! *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *I take it the videos will be done with actors doing the voices of the characters, someone reading the narration, along with music and sound effects.*



"We are breaking away from the ELFQUEST landscape."

Unused cover for KINGS OF THE BROKEN WHEEL #1.

WENDY: Won't that be fun?

PAT: *Do you have a time frame for the release of the first of the videos?*

RICHARD: The first one will be out no later than June 1st. We're looking to have all four out by year's end. We'd like to have the first new video — taken from the "Kings of the Broken Wheel" material — out sometime around the release of the color book.

WENDY: One thing we didn't tell you about "Kings of the Broken Wheel" is that we are breaking away completely from ELFQUEST's traditional landscape. In "Kings," we're not only going to play with different locations on this world we've created, we're also going to play with time, so things will be happening not only in far-away places we've never seen before on the world of two moons, but also at different times.

This is done, of course, with the possibility of ELFQUEST expanding into other media. But I'm excited about it because I get to draw some wonderful new things and put the characters in wonderful new costumes and have them deal with stuff they've never, ever dealt with or even conceived of dealing with.

RICHARD: Basically, the idea behind "Kings of the Broken Wheel" which you're going to have to abbreviate "KOBW — 99.9 FM on your dial" — is "Guys, you think you know what it's like to be on a quest; you don't know nothin'!"

PAT: *Let's talk about your other project, Richard, adapting Piers Anthony's XANTH novels into comics form. What*

"I am basically very skeptical of adaptations."

XANTH, by Richard Pini and Dennis Fujitake, based on the series of novels created and written by Piers Anthony.

led you specifically to those as a project?

RICHARD: I am very skeptical of adaptations. I've seen, as have we all, hundreds of them done and, in my humble opinion, very few of them have been done really well and effectively. A lot of them have been all right; some have been done poorly. But I'm generally skeptical of them because, if something works well in one medium, the chances of it working well in another are inherently slim.

We did the MYTHADVENTURES adaptations, and we had a lot of fun doing that, but ultimately it sort of just petered out. XANTH is a series I've been reading for a little while and, of all the science fiction and fantasy that I have read — at least recently — these stories *feel* the most like ELFQUEST feels. They are to a large degree written for a juvenile audience; grown-up readers can enjoy the heck out of them, but I think they're written for a juvenile audience, and so is ELFQUEST.

WENDY: Young adults . . .

RICHARD: Young adults . . .

I've known about XANTH for a long time, and I've known about **Piers Anthony** for a long time, and I've felt like XANTH is like ELFQUEST for a long time — but it wasn't until recently that those pieces of thought came together. I met **Piers Anthony** about five years ago at an American Booksellers Association show, and we chatted for a few minutes about this and that. I knew about his work and he knew about ELFQUEST. His daughters were big fans of ELFQUEST. At that time, he mentioned — just off the cuff — the idea of XANTH in graphic novel form the way ELFQUEST is in graphic novel form. I said, "Yeah, wouldn't that be a wonderful idea" and promptly forgot about it. About three years ago, I contacted him to do a story for us for BLOOD OF TEN CHIEFS, the ELFQUEST anthology series, and again didn't follow up on the XANTH graphic novel idea. Then, last fall, I got a letter from him, asking permission to incorporate some ELFQUEST elements into his newest XANTH novel, ISLE OF VIEW. If you know anything about Xanth, you know it's a pun-filled world. Say that fast and it's "I love you." He needed to have an elf character who could move around. In Xanth, the elves can't move around much because the further they get away from their elf elm trees, the weaker they get; this elf needed to move all over the world. The reason he needed this character is because he'd gotten a letter from the mother of a 12-year-old girl who'd been badly injured by a drunk driver. He entered into a correspondence with this girl — and the fact that she was and is a fan of XANTH and ELFQUEST and was getting letters from **Piers Anthony** really helped in her recovery. I should say "has helped," because she has a long period of recovery left.

Piers decided to put her into the next XANTH novel as an elf. But, since he needed that elf to go all over the world, Xanth elves wouldn't do. He reasoned, "She also loves ELFQUEST, maybe I can make her a visiting ELFQUEST elf." He wrote to us and we said we'd love to; please feel free.

So, the new XANTH novel, out in paperback in November, is actually an ELFQUEST-XANTH crossover novel.

In the course of our correspondence about this, I mentioned that I was enjoying the XANTH series, wouldn't it be wonderful if they were in graphic novel form, and Piers said, "Don't you remember . . .?" And he also paid us a very high compliment when he said, "If anyone were going to do the XANTH graphic novels, I'd want it to be the ELFQUEST people."

He twisted my arm and I said I'd love to do that; then it was just a matter of putting together the team. I'll tell you — I knew I wanted to try and get **Dennis Fujitake,** because I'd seen his work on DALGODA and RETIEF, and he has a wonderful, fresh, lively, fluid style that I thought would work perfectly with the young-adult nature of the XANTH stories. So I contacted him and he said he'd be happy to do it. He lives two blocks away from **Gary Kato,** who's doing the coloring, and wheels are turning; it's a wonderful project and a lot of fun.

WENDY: I just saw the first few pages of the XANTH graphic novel last week and felt tears coming, because the artwork is absolutely charming — and absolutely in tune with the level of the stories.

I have to admit Dennis surprised me. When Richard said he was getting Dennis, I tended to think of him more in terms of his DALGODA work . . .

PAT: *Which is sort of technological.*

WENDY: But he does have what I would

"I'm hoping to attract a lot of people who are

call — and I hope he's not offended by this — a feminine sensibility that applies very well to the organic nature of fantasy. It's coming through beautifully in his first XANTH novel.

I'm excited; I can't wait to begin reading this.

RICHARD: We'll adapt ISLE OF VIEW in three volumes, the first out in June. That excites me no end, because I think even XANTH fans who are not comics fans will be attracted to this, because it's the first installment of the new book that they won't get to read in prose for another five months. I'm hoping to attract a lot of people who are not comics aficionados into comics — at least appraising, if not buying — with this.

The second volume will be out around about the time the paperback comes out and the third next spring.

Then we have a wonderful option open to us: We can continue to adapt the new books Piers is writing, always staying a jump ahead of the paperback publication; or we can go back and adapt the earlier novels; or — God help us all — we can try to do both!

It's very exciting and it's good for WaRP Graphics because it feels like ELFQUEST and I don't want to do lots and lots of projects. I will limit the things we do to those projects that feel comfortable. If we can be said to have a company outlook or feel, it's characterized by ELFQUEST and XANTH. I wouldn't want to do big robots.

WENDY: If you think about it, there really aren't too many fantasy comics out right now. I think it's fortunate that WaRP Graphics has made itself known to generally non-comics readers through ELFQUEST, whether through BLOOD OF TEN CHIEFS, the graphic novels or someone passing on the comic series to someone who has never read a comic book before.

A great deal of ELFQUEST's audience is in among the science fiction and fantasy readers, who don't generally frequent comic-book shops. They will find out, through information in ELFQUEST and through talking to people

not comics aficionados into comics with this."

who read ELFQUEST regularly, about the other things that Father Tree Press is doing. And because of the association with **Piers Anthony**, it will again be among the realm of people who don't usually read comics.

The same thing happened with BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. Most of the people I'm getting feedback from, most of the letters First is sending on to me, are from people who never picked up a comic book in their lives. They happen to like the TV show and gave the book a try. They say, "I had no idea that comic books could be like this."

PAT: *I want to go back to the video project for a moment, because something occurred to me as you were discussing the young adult target audience for both ELFQUEST and XANTH.*

What do you see as the audience for the ELFQUEST videos? Young adults — or the pre-school through first grade audience usually attracted to that kind of thing?

RICHARD: I think it's the younger audience: six to eight, six to ten years old. I'm terrible at trying to parse people the way . . .

PAT: *The way marketers do?*

RICHARD: Right. The videos are geared for young kids. That's good enough for me. It's 5½ to 5½? *(Laughter.)* If ELFQUEST as published equates to BATMAN as it *was* published in the '70s, then these videos — and this is not pejorative — equate somewhat to SUPERFRIENDS, as Batman was portrayed on Saturday morning TV. We don't have anything to equate to DARK KNIGHT . . .

That's the shift. The videotapes will certainly make reference to the existence of the books . . .

WENDY: And the books will be noted to be young adult reading.

RICHARD: I think people will understand that ELFQUEST does exist on a variety of levels, in terms of the maturity of its presentation.

PAT: *I remember, during the original publication of ELFQUEST, a couple of times you got letters from people who were upset, because this was a story they had been reading to their children and suddenly there was an element they found inappropriate to expose their children to.*

WENDY: And it was *very* interesting what they found inappropriate. The violence was fine with them. It was the sexual things that bothered them.

PAT: *Have you thought at all about the need to edit the story for the videos, because of that problem?*

RICHARD: The videos will be edited. Consider that we're taking 20 issues worth of material and putting it onto four half-hour videos. These youngsters, who are coming upon these tapes for the first time, will get the entire story of ELFQUEST from start to finish — but I'd say we have pared as much as two-thirds of the sub-plots out of this treatment for the videotapes.

They will be perfectly geared to that age audience.

WENDY: Characters' motives will be portrayed as much simpler, much less in shades of gray than in the published version of ELFQUEST. Trolls are bad because they're trolls — there's no more explanation needed.

RICHARD: The die-hard ELFQUEST fans will probably shriek bloody murder for a number of reasons — one of which being "But you cut so much!"

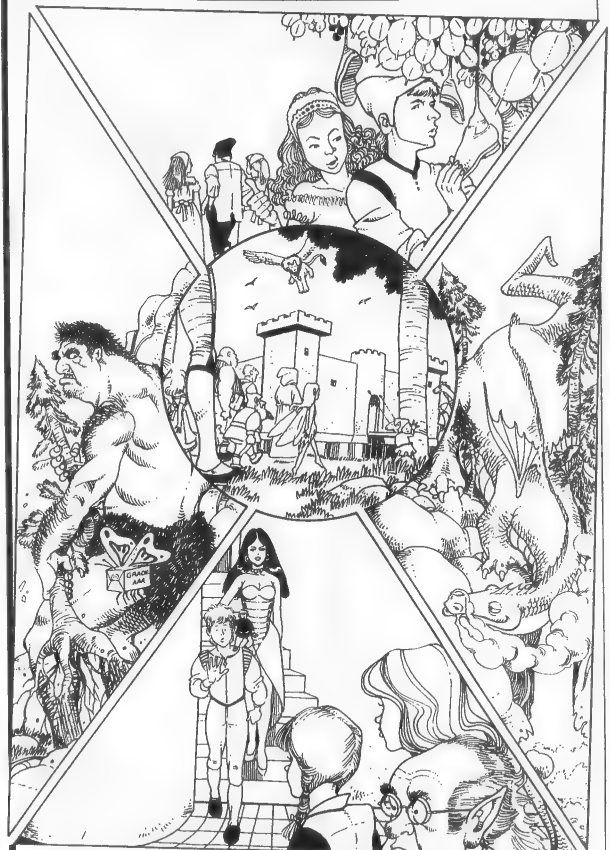
WENDY: Don't be too hard on the die-hard ELFQUEST fans; they're a pretty intelligent bunch.

RICHARD: Well, whoever it is that will scream bloody murder will do so — and you know that someone will. The point being that whoever protests will not understand what is necessary to take it from the comic format into the video format.

But we are satisfied with the adaptation. It serves its purpose well.

PAT: *What are your working methods like on ELFQUEST?*

Material from XANTH.



More material from XANTH.

"I'm beginning to understand why Cutter

WENDY: We have it down to a pretty simple system.

RICHARD: Actually, it's different now.

WENDY: Yes, because of the computer, there's quite a big difference.

RICHARD: We've gone high-tech. *(Laughter.)*

WENDY: We both have Mac Pluses that talk to each other. The traditional thing we still do is go to a shopping mall or on a long drive and have our plotting sessions. After that's done, I sit down and write the script. That goes into Richard's computer, he edits it, we discuss it. Then, very simply, I print out the edited script and begin to do breakdowns and pencils.

I do a page a day, penciled and inked; I'm barely penciling, I go directly to inks, practically. I can draw these characters in my sleep by now.

If we discover that there is some artwork that tells the story and dialogue is not needed, that will be shaped out of the script, afterwards.

PAT: *Do you find, as you're drawing, that there are sometimes scenes that should have been included in the script that were not? Does the path of the story alter as you draw it?*

RICHARD: That would happen, probably, during the plotting/scriptwriting phase. It hasn't happened yet, but we're still working on the first issue. It certainly could. That's one of the very nice things about being able to have linked computers.

WENDY: I do recall discovering what I thought was a plot hole. I called Richard and said, "Why is this character here?

Why doesn't he do *this* at this point?" We had to discuss it and figure it out; it was vital to the scene. As it turned out, it's important that that character do nothing, at that point, to bring forward his particular problem in the plot.

PAT: *So, unlike the way most comics are done, you're inking before the lettering is done. Richard, you're now lettering on computer?*

RICHARD: This is wonderful! Last year, at the San Diego Comics Expo, before the convention, I got to talking with **David Cody Weiss,** who is working at Disney. He had developed comics lettering typefaces; he had this whole system by which he could overlay the balloon, with the lettering, onto the scanned artwork. He could place the balloons anywhere he wanted, move them around, and then print out just the lettering and balloons.

He could then cut the balloons out and paste them to the finished art or give the page of balloons to the printer with the art with instructions to combine them to make the black plate.

I was just amazed at how good it looked. So I asked if it was available to we mere mortals. He said yes, so I licensed the software from him — it's proprietary, he owns it — and I've been learning how to do comic-book lettering.

I can't letter worth beans by hand; but on the Mac I can do it and it looks professional

PAT: *I believe he does lettering for DC and I heard mention that he was working by computer. On one of those computer*

feels the way he does about the Preservers."

networks we discussed before, Jim Massara, a letterer, was talking about something like this as well. He said once you have the letter forms in the computer, it's much simpler to just type the words in than to have to sit and carefully use a pen.

WENDY: And you never have to worry about correcting blobs of ink or misspellings . . .

RICHARD: There's a spell-checker built in. Anybody, with the right software, could create his or her own distinctive lettering and use it. David has done this — very well — he has two different styles of lettering . . .

WENDY: Here's something we haven't talked about: **Janice Chang** created the ultimate Preserve lettering. Is there any way to incorporate that into the system — or do we have to go back to Janice for that?

PAT: *Is there a way to scan a new font into the system?*

RICHARD: Now, *that* is an interesting question.

PAT: *That's one of the things that people talked about on the computer net. Is it possible to do an alphabet by hand and then incorporate it into the software? So that, for example, by hitting the right function keys, you'd be operating in the "Preserver" alphabet?*

RICHARD: There is at least one program with which you can do that now.

WENDY: If you scan artwork, why can't you scan lettering and then reproduce on a Xerox?

RICHARD: Because in a computer, you hit the "A" key and it goes into memory and makes the image of an "A" on the screen. If I scan that "A," it says "Here is a picture of an 'A.'"

PAT: *You have to have some way of taking that picture and making it come out when you strike the "A" key?*

RICHARD: Right. Right now, it's just a block of artwork, the same way any other picture is.

WENDY: I'm saying you could use Xerox. You could have one print-out of the alphabet and use the copies . . .

PAT: *You could even go to someplace like Letraset, which will make up special transfer sheets from your samples.*

RICHARD: Transfer sheets means going back to doing it by hand and very slowly.

WENDY: I'll tell you something: *I* ain't doing the Preserver lettering! *(Laughter.)*

RICHARD: Is there any Preserver talk in the first issue?

WENDY: Yes

RICHARD: Damn it! *(Laughter.)*

WENDY: I'll make sure there is!

PAT: *The problem is that computers are, actually, inherently stupid. All of them are, as someone said, merely a whole bunch of light switches that have been programmed to turn off and on in a particular fashion. When you strike a key on a computer, you are telling it, "Turn on this set of lights and turn off that set of lights." That creates the pattern. You'd have to have a program that says, "This set of switches creates this pattern."*

On a Mac there are different fonts built in.

RICHARD: I know the software I need. I suspect it's a variant of what David used to create his own lettering; I could have done the same thing with the time and the inclination. It looks like I'm going to have to, now.

I'm beginning to understand why Cutter feels the way he does about the Preservers. *(Laughter.)* Damn bugs!

WENDY: *(looks at Richard's plate)* You didn't eat your veggies.

RICHARD: I had some of my veggies.

PAT: *I had some of mine, too.*

WENDY: Look at both of these men! They're not eating their broccoli!

PAT: *Red meat! Red meat! We're men, Wendy!*

WENDY: This is why we have wars . . .

XANTH Graphic Novel Vol. 1
RETURN to CENTAUR
or: What Kind of Foal Am I?

"I had to work to get back to the stretch and squash."

PAT: *Or at least arguments between men and women.*

(Note: The preceding exchange occurred two weeks before President Bush's well-publicized pronouncements on the subject of broccoli.)

RICHARD: Getting back to the lettering: This is a step that Wendy doesn't have to do — or have done between the pencilling and inking. So, when she sits down to a blank sheet of paper, she can buzz right on through, at whatever speed she wants, without interruption.

PAT: *You do have to say, at least in your head, "This is where the balloon goes."*

WENDY: Yes. I've developed an instinct for that. I do have to compose the panels with the dialogue in mind.

With the simplicity to the approach to "Kings of the Broken Wheel," there will be many silent panels. And very little in the way of captions — the reader will understand through the artwork. That's my favorite kind of story-telling, where someone can read along and say, "Oohhh, I know what that means."

PAT: *Wendy, do you find it useful, as an artist, to be able to go to a non-ELFQUEST project as a break, a respite?* .

WENDY: Absolutely. BEAUTY AND THE BEAST was a dream from start to finish. It was a created project; we had to do a lot of convincing with **Ron Koslow** that the world needed a BEAUTY AND THE BEAST graphic novel. He's not a comic-book reader, even though his first cousin is **Steve Gerber.**

It's a small world, isn't it?

Once he saw that we were going to be true to the TV show and that Vincent was not going to be dressed in skin-tight tights and a cape *(laughter)*, he realized there would not be any loss of integrity in translating from one medium to another. He was very happy about it. We were given almost total freedom on the second graphic novel, once the script had been accepted

For me, I began to look at light differently. First of all, I was working in color; second of all, I wasn't doing cartooning. I was doing realistic, illustrative art with accurate portraits of the characters, being aware of lighting in quite a different way from ELFQUEST. It was thrilling. Some of the effects that

"I'd like to see ELFQUEST break out of the graphic novel

came out I look at and say, "I didn't know I could do that!" It was a revelation

Some of this is being carried into "Kings of the Broken Wheel." The art is richer and more lush, for having had the experience of a year and a half on BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

RICHARD: She had to learn how to draw elves again

WENDY: I'd been doing the human proportions, and had to work to get back to the stretch and squash of cartooning.

PAT: *I fondly remember the issue you did of JONNY QUEST. Like many of your projects, it had a gentler aspect than the general run of JONNY QUEST. Much as we all loved the action-adventure . . .*

WENDY: Part of that was due to **Bill Loebs.** We were doing the origin of Race Bannon. Race was my hero when I was 16; I wanted to be Jezebel Jade, live on a junk in Hong Kong and have adventures! Getting to do his origin was really a kick!

Bill did this tender story about Jonny's mother dying and brought Race in as the companion to complete the family again. It was very moving, very simply told and very easy to draw because it was all right there.

While I was working on it, Bill and I sort of linked psychically and I would give him art that he hadn't indicated in the script and he would call and say, "That's just what I wanted." It was the kind of story that happened that way.

PAT: *Did you find it interesting working from a model sheet of characters that were not your own?*

WENDY: I have been drawing Jonny since I was a kid. C'mon! I learned how to draw people from JONNY QUEST! One of the most exciting things that ever happened to me was meeting **Doug Wildey** at San Diego Con. After that, I got a package in the mail a few weeks later. He had sent me his very first study of Jonny. It blew me away — a nice smudged pencil drawing. You could tell it had been through the wringer, but this was his very first model study of Jonny. That is a treasure!

I used to draw the JONNY QUEST characters in high school and the teacher would come by and rip the page out of the notebook. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *I remember things like that, too.*

RICHARD: Somewhere we have —

WENDY: Oh, please don't tell!

RICHARD: — comics pages that she did back then. The show came out in '64 and '65 . . .

WENDY: I wasn't even 16!

RICHARD: She was enamored of it. There had not been anything like it on TV.

WENDY: It was inspiring.

RICHARD: So she set about doing her own funny books — a trend which was to continue.

WENDY: Richard loves to rag me on this. I did, back when I was a teenager, a page of Jonny and Dr. Quest in the lab and Jonny's looking at a bubbling, glowing flask, and Jonny asks, "What's this, Dad?"

RICHARD: The answer is something like "Balonium 37 . . . and phosphors." *(Laughter.)*

WENDY: What did I know? It glowed!

The JONNY QUEST project was a labor of love and, when I look back, I have been so fortunate in my career, because everything I have done has been a labor of love. I've never had to hack anything out. I feel guilty about this.

PAT: *Let's wrap this up with an attempt at prophecy or clairvoyance on your parts.*

RICHARD: I knew you were going to say that. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Where do each of you see WaRP Graphics, Father Tree Press, your own work, in five years?*

WENDY: What we'd like to see — or what we can realistically expect?

PAT: *Either way or both.*

WENDY: I'd like to see ELFQUEST break out of the graphic novel ghetto in Waldenbooks and see it in some other medium — film or TV — with most of its integrity intact. That is still a dream we

ghetto in Waldenbooks and see it in some other medium."

both share. As for my work, I think it will be very much what it has been; I'll continue doing ELFQUEST and other projects that I love on the side.

RICHARD: I'm looking at a plan — a combination of realistic and wish-dreaming — that within a year or two allows me to sell off the publishing rights to everything WaRP Graphics has done — at this moment, ELFQUEST and XANTH. I have been a publisher for the last dozen years; it has been fun, constructive, unfuriating, educational, eye-opening, depressing, elating and several other adjectives. I have found, though, in just the last few months, that I enjoy the heck out of working, doing the XANTH adapations, working with Wendy on ELFQUEST. I like it a lot.

I think I'd like, in the next five years, for some larger company to hold the license to publish what we produce or package. We might still be doing ELFQUEST; I hope still to be doing XANTH. But instead of me being on the phone to the printer and distibutors and all the other players in the publishing game, I just put the thing together and give it to this other entity.

PAT: *That's almost what you tried to do with Apple Comics.*

RICHARD: In a very embryonic way; but I'm setting my sights much higher this time around

I could even see myself as the liaison between that publisher and the printer . . . but not the one actually responsible for getting it done and paying the bills and so on and so forth.

WENDY: Underline paying the bills.

RICHARD: *I hate paying the bills!*

I think for someone of my temperament, what I've described would be a wonderful way to spend the next several years.

"The Aliens and Predators are pretty easy for me."

KARL

Inkers live in a strange world. If they do a good job, all the credit will go to the penciller; but if they do a bad job, they'll hear about it. Still, pencillers know that a good inker can make or break their work — and one of the inkers that pencillers are starting to notice is Karl Story. We started the Story story with his tale of breaking into the business . . .

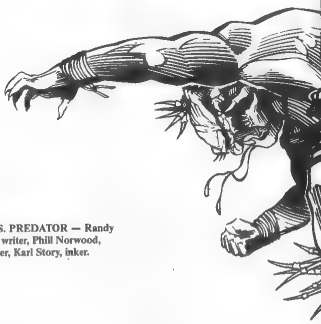
PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *Let's start with the real simple stuff: Where are you from? Where'd you go to school? How'd you get into the business?*

KARL STORY: I'm from Fort Walton Beach, Florida. When I was going to high school there, I met **Dave Dorman,** who has done quite a bit of artwork in the industry and is mainly known for his painting. He, in a way, took me under his wing for a while during my senior year in high school. I graduated in 1985.

He taught me some things and I owe Dave a lot for what I know. After that, I did a little bit of college and I went to art school for a year and a half. I didn't really learn anything there. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *Which art school did you go to?*

KARL: The **Joe Kubert** School. I liked the first year, but the second year I wasn't learning anything and I was getting professional work. Some of the teachers didn't care for the fact that I was working



ALIENS VS. PREDATOR — Randy Stradley, writer, Phill Norwood, penciller, Karl Story, inker.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Karl Story
Home: Fort Walton Beach, FL
Occupation: Inker
Credits: CYCOPS, X-THIEVES, ALIENS VS. PREDATOR
Art Education: Joe Kubert School
Seminal Influence: Michael Golden
Favorite Tool: Raphael series 8402 #4 brush

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"I don't think I have the patience to pencil."

STORY

professionally, although others were fantastic. I will admit that There were two or three out of the ten teachers I had during the second year that I could get along with and I learned things from. But the money it cost and the time it took from my real life weren't worth it. I left the school halfway through my second year, came back to Florida and found a bunch of little things to do.

I did some stuff with **Dave Dorman,** a little bit of work with First Comics, then came Comics Interview Group. I did some work on **Mark Propst's** pencils for X-THIEVES — background inks on issue #8, then full inks on #9 — then came CYCOPS, which was just incredible That was one of the most amazing projects I ever worked on. I know **Brian Stelfreeze** and I will work together again we're not sure on what yet.

PAT: *What was so special about CYCOPS?*

KARL: The story was great-and Brian's artwork was like no artwork in the industry yet. In an industry where you have umpteen people ripping off other people's styles — a **Neal Adams** clone here and a **Michael Golden** clone there — here's Brian, with a style that is totally his own.

Some people say he looks a little like **Walt Simonson,** but having inked three issues of his pencils, it's not like **Simonson** at all; he's definitely got his own style. It's even more incredible now, the way he's developed, because CYCOPS was his first comic-book work ever. He's got it down now, he's definitely a master. I was just up at his place a few weeks ago, and the stuff he does now is just amazing.

PAT: *How did you get the assignment to ink ALIENS VS. PREDATOR?*

KARL: Last year, at the '89 San Diego Comic Con, Brian and I were hanging out at the artists' alley. I had been talking to Dark Horse. I showed them some of my stuff and they said they might have a project for me. They came back by the table in artists' alley and **Randy Stradley** was looking at my work. One of the pieces I had out was an APPLESEED piece

"I did some work on X-THIEVES — then

that Brian had pencilled and I inked. He asked me, "Did you ink this?" and I said, "Yeah." "This is really, really nice," Randy said. "I definitely think we have a project for you. Let me come back later on."

Later on, he brought the penciller of ALIENS VS. PREDATOR, **Phill Norwood,** to take a look and I pretty much got the job right there on the spot. I have to credit that APPLESEED piece with helping out. It's definitely a piece I'm proud of. For all intents and purposes, that piece is owned by **Steve Smith** of Avalon Editions; he doesn't have it yet, though — I'm painting it now and I haven't had the time to finish it.

PAT: *Working on something like ALIENS VS. PREDATOR — or any kind of movie or TV adaptation — being able to maintain likenesses to the established creations — human or otherwise — is important. Part of that here is Phill Norwood's problem, but part of it depends on you as well. How do you deal with that?*

KARL: On this project, it's not quite as difficult. On Dark Horse's other ALIENS and PREDATOR projects, they have characters that do have to hold to likenesses. All we really have to worry about are the monsters. All the other characters in the story are completely original. Phill has created the likenesses of them. The Aliens and Predators are pretty easy for me — especially the Aliens. That has been one of my favorite movies ever since I first saw it back in '79 and then when the sequel came out it blew me away.

I had done some Aliens illustrations myself, before I ever got this project. If Phill pencils in an Alien and there's a little something missing, I have no problem adding that in. I always embellish them a little more, because they're so creepy and bio-mechanical. The Predators are pretty easy, too, because Phill has a knack for those guys. We did a whole bunch of those guys in the short stories in DARK HORSE PRESENTS — they're definitely Predators.

The only thing we have to worry about is keeping the overall look of the book as far as technology and things mechanical; keeping that in line with the Aliens and Predator universes. Phill, being a production designer for Hollywood — he's worked on THE ABYSS — has that end down. He comes out with the most elaborate technical backgrounds and devices. The hovercraft he designed just blow me away — they look like they work. He's definitely got a knack for that.

PAT: *A lot of inkers don't like working on technical stuff, because there's a necessity for preciseness that's not required if you're inking a human being. For example, if a line's out of a place on a person, most people won't notice, but on a piece of machinery if a line's not straight, or if a curve's not exactly the way it should be, everybody looks and says, "That's not right!" Even if it's a piece of machinery we've never seen before, we all know the lines should meet in specific places and things like that.*

Do you find that a hassle — or is it something you like to do?

KARL: I like to do it. It's kind of perverse in a way. Phill makes this background stuff so elaborate that it takes a lot of time, because I'm a very technical inker on that sort of thing. I've got my templates, my French curves and my straight edges. I work on those things with almost a passion to make them look as good, as realistic, as I can.

I always had that problem with technical stuff that just didn't cut it. "That won't work — give me a break." All the stuff that Phill is doing here definitely works. He's technically proficient.

The only problem with it is that it takes a lot of time and with the schedule on ALIENS VS. PREDATOR being so

Below, DAK discovery Brian Stelfreeze with 9-foot-tall character, Ragocy, from CYCOPS. Next page, art from same by same.

Photo: Woodcock

came CYCOPS, which was just incredible."

tight, that has sort of become a problem. I love doing those backgrounds — I'm not going to erase them or something — I want to make them look as good as I can.

PAT: *You're not likely to go out and hire a background inker for yourself?*

KARL: I do have people helping me. I have to. Each page on the series is so detailed that there's no way one person alone could get it out on the deadline that is set for it.

I've got a couple of people helping me out. They each do more than one thing; they drop in little things here and there, sometimes backgrounds. **Brian Stelfreeze** and **Mark Propst** are both giving me a hand on it. I'm extremely grateful for all the help they've given me.

PAT: *Do you find yourself, when you get a pencilled page in front of you, gravitating toward the things you like to do and getting them done first?*

KARL: Yeah — I'm afraid I do. I can go through all the pages and do all the technical work first. Sometimes I do that. I'm working on the second issue right now and I've done that this time. I've gone in and on all but one page I've finished all the technical work. All that remains is brush inking and doing the organic things.

PAT: *How about technique and tools? You said "brush work" — so I assume that on technical work you're not using brushes, which I would expect. What kind of tools do you use?*

KARL: The technical pen I use for the technical work is the Ropring rapidograph. I swear by it. I've had this set for a year now. For brushes, I use the Raphael series 8402 #4. That amazes a lot of people — **Brian Stelfreeze** calls it a mop. *(Laughter.)*

PAT: *A 4 is an awfully big brush.*

KARL: It comes to the best point. I've used several of the smaller sizes — a 1 and a 3 — but neither of those had as good of a point or the snap to the brush that the 4 does. And it holds more ink – I have no problems dipping it into the ink and working for quite a while before I have to dip it again. It has amazed a lot of people who don't believe I can ink with that thing. But I can get hairlines with that brush — it's just amazing.

PAT: *What ink do you use?*

KARL: Higgins Black Magic.

PAT: *Yeah — it's pretty much a choice between Higgins or Pelikan. Do you treat it at all? Some people like to water it down a little bit.*

KARL: Only when it starts to get thick. If the ink sits for a while and it gets down to the bottom of the bottle, it starts to sludge up a little bit. Then, I'll either replace the ink or water it out a little bit.

PAT: *You can probably tell I know something about this stuff. I was a wannabe-artist all through high school. I went to Pratt Institute here in New York for six months and quickly discovered that my talent wasn't as good as I thought. Then I gravitated toward the writing. But I have enough background that I can talk to artists and not have it sound like I'm groping. Have you done any pencil work?*

KARL: I don't get into it that much. The pencil work I do is mostly for myself. I don't think I have the patience to pencil a

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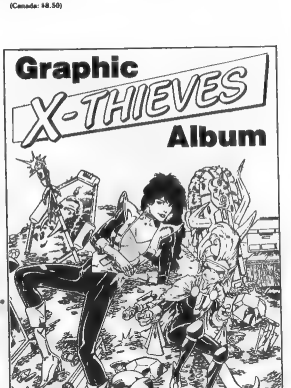

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"Whenever I pencil something, I want to ink it."

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24-page book every month. It's a very tedious process for me. Whenever I pencil a comic-book style piece, I want to ink it.

PAT: *I always found the inking to be much more tedious than the pencils. I guess because I was almost always inking my own work, at that point, you feel like you've already done this. You've pencilled it, it's done —*

KARL: I never thought of it that way. I never thought it was finished until it was in black and white

PAT: *I can see that. If you're looking at comic-book work and the various things*

"Professionally, I hope I'll be one of those inkers

involved in it — layout, story-telling, breakdowns, anatomy, rendering — what is the most important to you? What are the top two or three things that say to you "This is well-done work"?

KARL: That's a tough one. When I look at work, as far as inking goes, I look for clean inking. When I see work that has a real sharp edge to it, a kind of a cleanness to it, that really appeals to me.

There has to be good drawing underneath it all, of course. I very seldom like work that I look at and can say, "This guy's got a good inker, but he's not very good." But get a killer team together and I'll buy that book.

The only kind of collector I ever was in comics was the kind who bought really excellent artwork.

PAT: *How did you begin your interest in comics?*

KARL: When I was a kid, riding my bike, I would head down to the bookstore with my allowance and buy some comics. I remember buying a couple of different ones just to read and stuff — this is where one of my main influences comes in. I saw the MICRONAUTS series by **Mike Golden** and that just laid me out. I'd never seen comic work like that before. I followed that series until **Golden** left and other artists came on it, who just weren't as good. I stopped buying it really fast.

I kept a look out for books that **Mike Golden** drew and eventually I found some other artists who were excellent, but I have to say that **Mike Golden's** work is definitely the stuff that got me into comics. A couple of the books that he did — a Marvel annual one time that was just amazing. I've talked to several artists and they almost consider it a bible on how to do a comic.

One of the things that got me about his stuff was when I learned he inked with a brush — or at least he did at one time. I've noticed he's using pens instead on his

SCRIPT/PLOT-- HENRY VOGEL
PENCILS/PLOT-- MARK PROPST
INKS-- KARL STORY
LETTERS-- T.R. DAVIDSON
EDITS-- DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN
PLOT-- DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT
A VOGEL, PROPST, KRAFT CREATION
DID YOU EVER HAVE ONE OF THOSE DAYS?

that pencillers will try to get on their books."

newer stuff. When I learned he used a brush, I couldn't believe it. I'd never touched a brush as far as inking goes before. I thought, "He does that with a brush? No way! No way!" I started fooling around with a brush, just playing with it, seeing what I could do and I never got into it seriously until I found the right brush, until I found that Raphael.

The brush really does matter. This is an expensive one.

PAT: *Looking at your colleagues, the other inkers in the business — who are the best, the influences?*

KARL: The guys I think kick some ass are **John Beatty,** definitely — he does some amazing work. Most of the other guys I really like are pencillers also — **Kelley Jones** is really good. And there are the big guys, like **Barry Windsor-Smith;** when he inks his own work there's no comparison. As afar as just plain inkers go — **Beatty** and **Bob Wiacek,** also — he's a damn good inker.

PAT: *Do you harbor any ambitions to become a one-man show in the business — writer, penciller, inker?*

KARL: Not at this time. I really enjoy working with other people and doing the best project we can as a team. I really like working in a team environment. Doing something completely on my own — I suppose I could do it eventually, but I don't really think I have the confidence to do it right now — and I don't really have the desire, either.

I've been talking to people, thinking about projects to do after this one is over, working as a team with somebody else.

PAT: *If you had your choice of a project, is there something in existence you would want to be in on?*

KARL: I'd like to continue working with Dark Horse; I really enjoy working with these guys. But a specific thing — I'm not sure, I'm pretty flexible, I really enjoy a science-fiction kind of work — and horror, though I haven't done any of that yet. Then again, sometimes I go to the comic store and pick up some of the mainstream super-hero titles and I flip through them and realize, "Geez, these guys are probably getting paid more than me and there's nothing on these pages. The pages I'm working on are so ultra-detailed — wouldn't it be nice to do a book like this for a while, then relax and wait for the check?"

Honestly, I do like the SF. I wouldn't toss out the chance to do a super-hero book, if only to pay the bills — and I know I'd enjoy it.

PAT: *Any particular penciller that you haven't worked with that you say, "I'd really like to get my hands on some of his pencils"?*

KARL: There are some really good pencillers out there: **Mike Mignola,** for one. I'd love to work with **Mike Golden;** I'm just not sure how much work he's doing anymore. **Art Adams** — I've always liked his stuff. It's incredibly detailed, too, I know — but I would really enjoy doing it. Some of my very early inking samples were over Xeroxes of some **Art Adams** pencils. I got a real kick out of that. I compared my inks to the ones in the comic when it was published; there wasn't very much difference.

PAT: *Given all we've talked about, where do you see Karl Story in about five years?*

KARL: Living in a nice place, paying my bills, possibly married. Professionally, I hope I'll be one of those inkers that pencillers will try to get on their books. Lots of times, a penciller would prefer to ink his own work — but when they have to have an inker, they hope they have a choice in it. I've talked to pencillers and they always say, "I wish I could pick who it was." I hope eventually I'll be an inker that somebody would like to have on their book.

That would feel pretty good.

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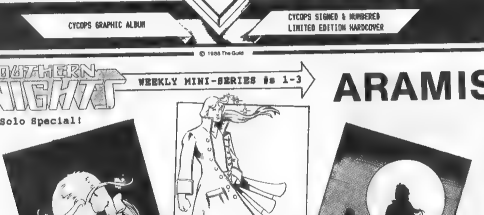

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"My original intention in life was to get into film."

RANDY STRADLEY

It seems sometimes that nearly everyone involved in the licensed properties at Dark Horse — ALIENS and PREDATOR (not to mention TERMINATOR, too –) started out wanting to make movies or has fallen into it in one way or another. That's true of writer Mark Verheiden, artist Phill Norwood and editor Randy Stradley. Randy spoke to Patrick Daniel O'Neill about his once-and-future film career, comics and the connections between the two . . .

PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL: *Tell me a little about yourself. Where do you hail from?*

RANDY STRADLEY: Oh, I hate these interviews! I'm from Portland. My original intention in life was to get into film. After **Mark Verheiden** and I unsuccessfully pounded our heads against that door for several years, we went our separate ways and decided to get into comics, along with **Chris Warner.** I went back East for awhile. Chris, **Mark Badger** and I all shared a hell apartment in Jersey City. From there, I started my glorious comics career at Marvel and DC. I did one or two jobs at each company.

PAT: *When was that?*

RANDY: Roughly 1984. A year or so later, I ended up in Los Angeles working for the L.A. TIMES and **Mark Verheiden** and I were kicking around a few ideas. **Mike Richardson** called me and said, "I'd like to start publishing comics. How'd you like to be an editor?" Mike and I always talked along the lines of "There's gotta be more to comics than this." We loved comics as kids, but we'd outgrown what was being produced. We knew that comics as a medium didn't have to be limited to what was being published then.

Mike was running a chain of retail comics stores, I was managing one of them, and we put together the first issue

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Randy Stradley
Home: Portland, OR
Occupation: Editor, Dark Horse Comics
Education: Self-taught as a writer; spent some time in DC's new writers workshop under **Paul Levitz**
Credits: Editor of DARK HORSE PRESENTS, CONCRETE, ALIENS, PREDATOR, ALIENS VS. PREDATOR, others
Ambition: Get back into movies eventually

"There is something in Giger's original vision

of DARK HORSE PRESENTS for them. We used the resources from the stores to get us off the ground and we've been on our own since then.

PAT: *Where'd you get your schooling? Did you go to college?*

RANDY: No, I'm one of those self-educated people. Everything I know about doing anything is from doing it. I'm still learning — about printing and production.

PAT: *When you spent that brief time out here in the East, working for Marvel and DC, what kind of things were you doing for them?*

RANDY: Well, I wrote an issue of STAR WARS for Marvel. I had a story published in NEW TALENT SHOWCASE and a Superman story published. Probably the best thing that happened was that I was put into the new writers workshop that **Paul Levitz** was running. It covered a lot of the basics, but it was real helpful to see what other people were doing, to see what thought processes they went through, to be able to pick Paul's brain once in a while. I still sort of parrot some of the things Paul taught when I talk to people at conventions and they bring things to me to read.

PAT: *How did Dark Horse and ALIENS get together?*

RANDY: We were talking about various licensed properties that we could go after and what we wanted to go after. The first one that we wanted was TERMINATOR, and at that time TERMINATOR was involved in some kind of litigation and the property just wasn't available. I don't know if it was the situation with **Harlan Ellison** or not, but it wasn't available.

ALIENS was our next choice. It turned out to be a good choice. We knew the book would be successful, but none of us had any idea of how successful. We have a real good relationship with 20th Century Fox, we work real closely with

of the Alien that's just incredibly compelling."

DESPITE HIS SPEED AND STRENGTH AND PRACTICED MOVES, THE "WARRIOR" WAS NOT A SMART FIGHTER--
--HE WAS LIKE A KARATEKA WHO HAD MASTERED HIS STYLE, BUT HAD NEVER FACED AN OPPONENT IN ACTUAL COMBAT.

them and cooperated with them during the early stages, where there was nobody to ask questions like "How long can Aliens exist in a vacuum? What happens when they're exposed too long?"

PAT: *It's not like STAR TREK, where there's this long tradition of material available?*

RANDY: No. For a while, the licensing people were going to **Jim Cameron** and getting his views whenever possible. In a way it was nice, because we were left to forge new ground ourselves for a lot of it. Whether the explanations and situations we've come up with are paid any attention in future films is doubtful, but since no further sequels seem immediately imminent, we're not too worried about it.

The first series was very successful. The second one just wrapped up and probably sold double what the first one had, and the third one should be on the stands by the time this interview sees print.

PAT: *How did ALIENS VS. PREDATOR come about?*

RANDY: We were doing ALIENS, dealing with Fox, we were interested in doing PREDATOR, and during a bull session one day, **Chris Warner** put the two together. We'd been talking about goofy sort of team-ups, and he said, "ALIENS vs. PREDATOR!" and the lights went on over everybody's heads. Fox was . . .

PAT: *Amenable?*

RANDY: Yeah -- in fact, we called them up and said, "What about ALIENS vs. PREDATOR?" and they said, "You mean King Kong vs. Godzilla? *(Laughter:)* Great! Let's do it!" Literally, that's how difficult it was.

PAT: *Fox owns complete copyrights on both sets of characters . . . so there's no legal problems?*

RANDY: As I understand it, they own them outright, but through professional courtesy, on PREDATOR, **Joel Silver** is consulted . . . especially since he's in the process of producing the sequel right now.

PAT: *What, in your opinion, is it about these concepts that attracts people so strongly?*

RANDY: I don't know. I was bowled over by the first ALIEN movie and I thought the second film was a perfect sequel, because instead of being a remake of the first, it took the situations in a different direction and expanded upon them. There's something in **Giger's** original vision of the Alien that's just incredibly compelling. In the first film, when you just catch glimpses of it, there's no point of reference except mouth and claws. No eyes, the head is this elongated thing that doesn't exactly look right. Everything is weird about it.

HE HAD NOT CHOSEN A "GOOD" FIGHT...
...NOR HAD HE ALLOWED FOR ANY OUTCOME OTHER THAN VICTORY.
THERE'S A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEROISM AND STUPIDITY. IN THE END, THE "WARRIOR" GAINED NOTHING BUT A GLORIOUS--AND POINTLESS--DEATH.

"Once we started dealing with Fox, we

Visually, they're just compelling. Especially after the first movie I wondered if the image didn't strike a race memory or something. After that first movie, everywhere you looked you could see Aliens, whether they were there or not.

PREDATOR doesn't quite have the following that ALIENS does; it's the first foe **Schwarzenegger's** ever had that looked like it could stand up to him. *(Laughter.)* That may have something to do with the appeal, although we haven't used the Schaeffer character in any of our stories. The appeal is still there, though.

PAT: *As an editor, what do you find to be the problems in attempting to transfer this kind of science fiction/horror from film to the printed page?*

RANDY: The main problem is just one of explanation to the people involved. Some understand it and others seem to have an incredible time grasping the fact that they don't and we don't own these characters. There are going to be things you might want to do with them that you're not going to be able to. A lot of people seem to have trouble accepting that. It's not like you could just walk into DC and say, "I'm going to have Batman do this and have Batman do that." They're going to say, "No, you're not." Twentieth Century Fox is no different. There are ideas to which they'll say, "That's a good idea," and there are other ideas to which they'll say, "No, please don't."

Editing on a licensed property is very different. Normally, you're sort of the go-between for the publisher and creative team, sometimes between the writer and artist. Licensing just adds another corner to the triangle. You have to keep everyone happy and keep the product as undiluted as possible. It adds a degree of difficulty and adds time to the process. Fox has been real easy to work with, open to a lot of new ideas and cooperative with us.

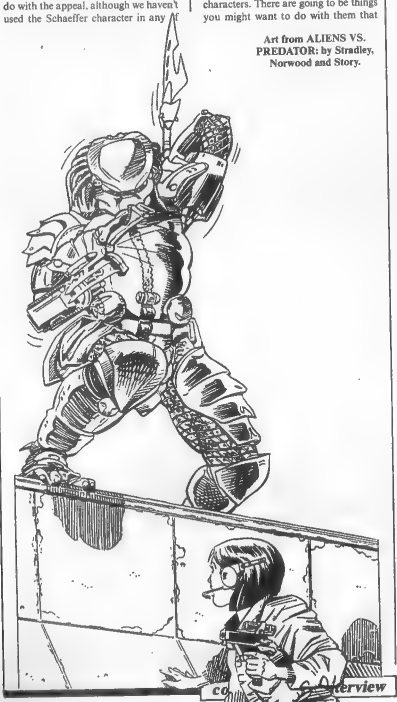
PAT: *How do you translate the impact of these characters, these monsters, from film to the page? What has to be done to make it work?*

RANDY: It has to be approached differently from film. That goes for any comic. In film, you control the pacing completely. The audience is essentially captive in a darkened theater and the story unfolds for them at a predetermined rate. In comics, the pacing is determined by the reader, pretty much. How long they want to stare at one panel is entirely up to them.

There are some things — the kind of balls-out action that you saw in the movie ALIENS works wonderfully on film. The action in PREDATOR works much better on film than if you tried to do exactly the same story in comics. In comics, because you're telling the story in a series of freeze-frame as opposed to moving images — you don't have sound, you don't have music, you don't have the immediacy of the actors' voices — you have to play on the reader's imagination and work harder toward getting them inside the characters' heads, at least identifying with the main characters enough that their suspension of disbelief is held. Again, this is not just with licensed properties, it holds true for any story you're doing in comics.

PAT: *Part of what made the movies work — and this goes back to your discussion of pacing — was an element of surprise and shock. I take it you're saying you cannot capture that same element in the comics page?*

RANDY: You can to a certain extent — but certainly in the movies part of the



Art from ALIENS VS. PREDATOR: by Stradley, Norwood and Story.

discovered it's really not all that difficult."

thrill was seeing the Aliens for the first time, or seeing the Alien queen for the first time. Now that everybody's seen them, you can't rely on that visual horror.

Mark Verheiden in the ALIENS series has handled things real well; there have been a number of surprises that worked because your expectations were led in other directions They're things that would also work in movies, but they worked particularly well in comics.

PAT: *What do you think are the particular problems the artist faces in something like this?*

RANDY: Mainly just getting the likenesses correct — and the same is true for any character. On Batman, there's a certain amount of artistic license you can take, but basically he should have ears on his cowl, scallops on his cape and a utility belt, because that's the image that DC has trademarked. On ALIENS, the image Fox has trademarked is of the Alien . . . if you drew something with two heads or a set of antlers or something, obviously that moves too far away from their trademark for them to accept. In fact, even much less goofy variations would still move it beyond their trademarked property. In that sense, **Phill Norwood** has been very good at drawing these characters who are so detailed and so familiar to the readers that you're going to get a million letters if you get them wrong.

PAT: *ALIENS and PREDATOR are among a bunch of major properties in the last several years that have been licensed to smaller comics companies, like Dark Horse. What created the opening for companies like yours to get in on this kind of licensing?*

RANDY: I don't know exactly. All I know is that neither Marvel nor DC were doing them. We were the company that expressed interest and essentially the only ones bartering for them. The idea that someone other than DC or Marvel has the resources or the clout to go in and make a deal like this is what's more surprising than anything. Once we started dealing with Fox, we discovered it's really not that difficult, as long as you can assure them a profit on their investment.

PAT: *Where do you see yourself and Dark Horse going in the next several years?*

RANDY: We're going to go in all different directions. We'll continue to do licensed projects; there are a couple we've acquired recently that you probably won't see anything about for a number of months. We'll continue to do more creator-owned properties — **Paul Chadwick's** back at work on CONCRETE; **Frank Miller** and **Dave Gibbons** have GIVE ME LIBERTY; **Mark Verheiden** is back to THE AMERICAN, which is also in the beginning stages of production as a motion picture. We've also sold THE MASK as a motion picture to New Line Cinema . . . and we're developing good relationships with people in Hollywood which I think will lead to more and more Dark Horse characters being translated to the screen, as opposed to us taking screen characters and adapting them to comics. We have lots of different ideas for taking different characters and properties into different markets other than just the comics market.

Personally, I'd like to move into a little more supervisory role here and take the opportunity to produce some films in the future.

ALIENS painting by John Bolton.

PAT: *So, by getting into comics you're sort of "back-flooring" yourself into movies — what you started out wanting to do.*

RANDY: Yeah — it all worked out anyway.

PAT: *When you first made the move into comics, did you do it because you saw it as a related field in some way?*

RANDY: Sure. Basically, what I wanted to do was tell stories and the idea of telling stories with pictures is fascinating. In a lot of ways, I like doing comics more than films because it's not such an unwieldy process. It's usually just three or four people collaborating to produce a particular story. There are things I just find fascinating in that you can suspend a reader's disbelief, so that even though you're telling a story with a series of still pictures, within their minds they see the action; they're watching it unfold, in a different way than it would appear on film. There's a lot going on in the reader's head.

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

THIS LOOKS LIKE A JOB FOR — ROY THOMAS

Dear COMICS INTERVIEW:

I'm 21 years old, female, and have fallen in love with DC Comics' INFINITY, INC. and ALL-STAR SQUADRON.

A small problem: These two wonderful series have been undeservedly cancelled. Infinity, Inc. was the first "weird" super-hero team of the 1980s, even weirder than **Grant Morrison's** DOOM PATROL in many ways. I can honestly say that the Infinitors are the most realistic characters that I have ever encountered in my 13 years as a comics reader.

Infinity, Inc. broke all the rules.

There's Wildcat II — a female rock reporter for ROCK STARS MAGAZINE, Nuklon — a shy, awkward 7'6" Jewish boy with a mohawk, Obsidian — a repressed, get-rich-any-way-you-can kid who owns a radio station and doesn't have any friends, Jade — a green girl who wants to be an actress, Dr. Midnight II — a black, blind physician, Hourman II — a misunderstood, aspiring artist, Brainwave II — the son of a super-villain, Northwind — a hybrid of a black man and a birdwoman, and Fury II — daughter of the three Furies of Greek mythology. Her husband Hector was murdered in SANDMAN #12.

Friends of Infinity include a living skeleton (Mr. Bones) and a dead man (Solomon Grundy).

Still not convinced? I recommend checking out issue #s 14-37 and ANNUAL #1 which featured red-hot artist **Todd McFarlane's** weirdest, most *avant-garde* work ever. **McFarlane's** art on SPIDER-MAN is *tame* compared to his work on INFINITY, INC.

I also think that DC is missing the boat if they don't give Infinity, Inc.'s Wildcat II her own series. With her sleek, sexy costume and mutant catlike powers, she has the potential to be a female Wolverine. Does anyone agree with me?

I would also like to see the wonderful All-Star Squadron revived. Not only was it the *largest* super-hero team ever (79 members), but it was also the only showcase for many of the Golden Age characters who were active during the 1940s. Without ALL-STAR SQUADRON, most of the heroes of the Golden Age will never be seen again and that would be a crime. (By the way, **Todd McFarlane's** first artwork for DC was published in ALL-STAR SQUADRON #47.)

My friends and I (Karen, John and Paul) have initiated a campaign to revive these two wonderful comic-book series. Perhaps INFINITY, INC. and ALL-STAR SQUADRON can be revived (preferably in the Standard Format) if enough people write to DC and demand it. *Please* write to: Mr. Dick Giordano, c/o DC Comics, Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103.

Tell your friends!

Kaye-Lynn Scott
Anaheim, CA

COMICS INTERVIEW #88

COMICS INTERVIEW: THE BEST

Please send THE MASTERS OF MARVEL. And, whilst I'm writing, can I congratulate you on some of the best comic-related material I've read — I particularly enjoyed the two **John Byrne** issues, **Perez** in #50 and the WATCHMEN SPECIAL EDITION - I'm sure I won't be disappointed this time!

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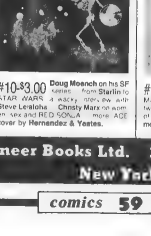

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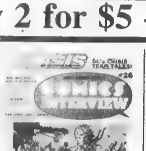

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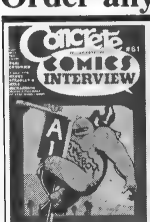

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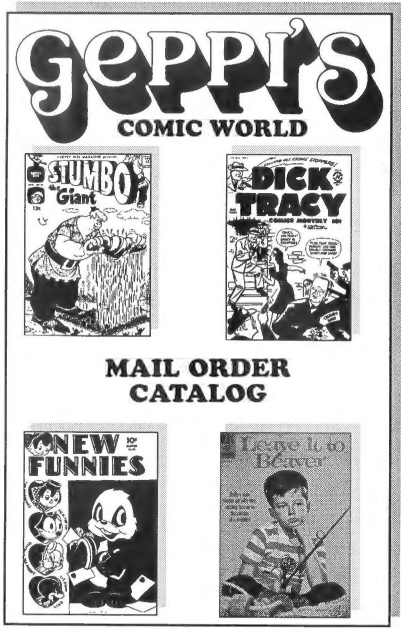

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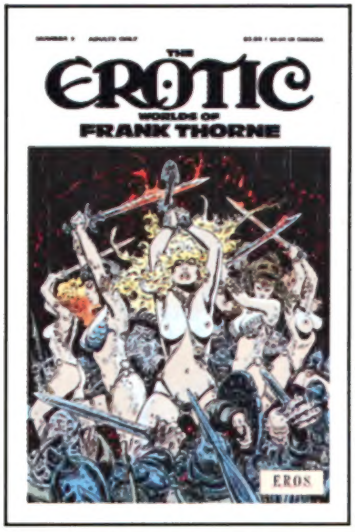

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